INVESTIGATING A YUP'IK IMMERSION PROGRAM:
WHAT DETERMINES SUCCESS?

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A

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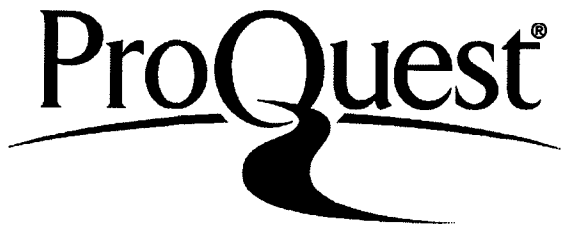

## Abstract

This research stems from my connectedness to a particular village, which will be referred to as Naparyaraq[1]. Unlike the majority of research on Alaska Native language issues, which primarily are from the point of view from an outsider, this research is unique in that my role as a community member has allows me an insider perspective of our Yup'ik Immersion Program. When dealing with Indigenous language issues, it is important that the impetus for change and improvements come from the local people. The primary goal of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program resulted from the communities desire to create change. Community members wanted to keep the Yup'ik language alive. Growing up in Naparyaraq and my familiarity with the language issues has also driven me to be a personal participant in this change. Using focus groups, interviews, classroom observations, and field notes, the main goal of this Master's thesis is to inform the teachers and school community of the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program in order to continue to help make improvements. Some of the issues which are addressed in this research include information related to: language use, success, training, language use at home, support, success, quality staff, assessment, need for teacher collaboration, and curriculum.

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[1] Naparyaraq is a pseudonym. All names and places in the thesis are pseudonyms.

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Acknowledgments

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*"Our cultures are forgotten now. Pingnatungremciteng. Just like-llu, kirrema wii naugem piluguggsaararturianga. Pilugugtullriameng tangyuini. Paltuuget amlleriata capakit-llu amlleriata"* (Yup'ik elder of Naparyaraq, December 15, 2008).
*(Our cultures are forgotten now. Even if we try to do them. Just like I'm the only one who wears seal skin boots. I never see anybody wearing seal skin boots due to the fact that there is an abundance of [Westernized] coats and shoes.)*

Piluguqs (sealskin waterproof boots) laboriously made and described by the elder above were once traditionally one of the most necessary clothing of Alaska Native people. Today, with the modernization and influence of Western culture, they have been effortlessly replaced by name-brand shoes such as Nike or Sorels and as a result are very rarely used in the context of everyday Yup'ik life. Rather than serving the purpose which they traditionally had, they are viewed today more like a decorative object, being used mainly during traditional Yup'ik dancing. As an Alaska Native woman who has spent a portion my childhood in a traditional Yup'ik household consisting of a fluent Yup'ik speaking mother and grandparents, and who has personally observed a shift in language and cultural traditions, it is interesting for me as I metaphorically read within the lines of the elder's statement. For me, the sealskin boots are analogous to the Yup'ik language, while the abundance of [Western] clothing and shoes could be compared to the English language. Imagine, like the elder above, being one of a few who still wear the traditional boots and compare it to being one of the last few speakers an Indigenous language. One Indigenous group from

Alaska did in fact recently lose their last speaker. On January 21, 2008, the Eyak tribe lost the last speaker of the language (McKinney, 2008). Although the Yup'ik language does have a considerable amount of speakers today, it is not safe to say this will remain so. It is apparent that language shift is occurring for the Yup'ik language speakers and the number of speakers has spiraled down from 13,000 speakers to 10,000 speakers (Krauss, 1992). One way that language loss and language shift are currently being confronted by Alaska Native people are through immersion school programs. Currently, in the Yup'ik region of the Lower Yukon School District, which has approximately 2000 students, there is only one school that has been working towards the goal of language revitalization. That school resides in a village, which I will refer to throughout this research as Naparyaraq. As a resident of Naparyaraq and as an educator who once taught in the Naparyaraq Program, the main goal of my research has been to inform the school community of the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program with the hopes that the school community would view this research as a valuable tool which could assist their revitalization efforts. Initially the goals of this research was only to evaluate the program of Naparyaraq, but it has since evolved to include elements of action research, where the researcher and the participants discussions have aided in making changes to the program.

*Theoretical Framework*

The majority of this research study is based on the idea that immersion schools are in a unique position to support language revitalization efforts. Because schools

provide such a unique social setting, and because their powerful influence on language is evident in the past eradication of Native languages, it is understandable why communities looking to impact language in terms of revitalization look to the school's power in helping to restore languages (Peacock & Day, 1999). Rather than being used as a tool "of cultural and linguistic oppression," languages are instead used in the advancement of "human rights and minority-community empowerment (McCarty, 2003, p. 160). The school is now challenging the home environment, which was once an important setting of language transmission. According to DeJong (1998), the way in which language is being transmitted and learned today is within the context of school. This should not be a surprise, after all, students spend as much as half of their day in school in the company of their teachers and peers. Although the school could be viewed in competition with the home when it comes to language transmission, many times the schools are looked to as a way for improving the Native way of life. In addition to assisting in the renewal of Native languages, language immersion schools are sought out as a way to improve some of the societal problems that have been plaguing Indigenous communities. According to Johansen (2004) "Language immersion programs are part of a growing commitment to traditional Native education often initiated by parents and educational professionals seeking an alternative to students' alienation and high dropout rates in federal or local public schools" (p. 568).

*Rational*

During my initial years as a Yup'ik immersion School teacher within the Naparyaraq Immersion Program, I remember feeling a sense of doubt as to my qualifications as a language teacher. Not only was I a novice teacher fresh out of college, but also I was unaware of what exactly language teaching entailed. My knowledge of the Yup'ik language was developed from my immediate family. Although my mom communicated with my aunts, uncles and grandparents in their first language (Yup'ik), my generation, which was the third-generation, was not necessarily encouraged to speak only Yup'ik and so we mainly spoke English. Since we were not required to speak the Yup'ik language, the Yup'ik, which my peers and I engaged in consisted of basic words. Many of us understood just enough Yup'ik to perform commands, which our parents or grandparents requested of us. Still, some of us understood enough of the language to listen in on a conversation between older adults, which we would interrupt in English. Other than that, it was rare for my generation to fully communicate with an elder in Yup'ik. My lack of Yup'ik fluency remained with me throughout my high school education and college education. The Yup'ik courses, which I took in high school and college, were remedial and tended to focus on the usage of grammar rather than language for communicative purposes. It was only later on in my professional career as a newly hired teacher in the community in which I grew up in Naparyaraq, did I find Yup'ik would be of importance. Due to a need of Yup'ik teachers within the newly created Naparyaraq Immersion School, I was put into a 1st and 2nd grade position along with a fluent Yup'ik teacher in the hopes of

meeting the goal of expanding the immersion program. I had wanted very much to return to the community in which I had grown up in, but it appeared there wasn't an opening in the English classrooms, and because I wanted to be placed in my hometown, the district administration decided to put me in the immersion program, provided I work with a fluent Yup'ik co-teacher. With the support of a fluent Yup'ik teacher and with the assistance of our Yup'ik speaking teacher aide, I was able to get through my first two years of teaching in the Yup'ik Immersion program. During these two years, I remember I would constantly question my abilities. At times, I remember feeling overburdened with the thought that my lack of Yup'ik skills would contribute to my students lack of Yup'ik language skills. Many times I found myself thinking people in the community, especially the parents of the children I was teaching, identified me as an English speaker, so I felt that they didn't trust their children were learning in Yup'ik. It is interesting though that no parent actually ever came to me and directly pointed out my lack of Yup'ik speaking skills. Rather than questioning my Yup'ik fluency, many parents and community members would instead ask me to confirm my position in the immersion program as if they were hoping to disprove a rumor. A few parents and community members occasionally commended me for returning to my village to teach the children, but I would never hear how parents felt about my role in the immersion program. During my time in the Yup'ik immersion program, there were times when I would question my abilities as a language teacher. In a sense though, I felt the extra duties and demands I had fulfilled as a language teacher made up for my lack of Yup'ik language fluency.

In addition to taking classes outside of my community to improve my Yup'ik language proficiency, I was putting in the extra hours demanded of language teachers to create curriculum in sync with the English curriculum. The camaraderie, pressure, willingness and desire were felt equally by my coworker and I. The support I felt from my co-teacher helped me tremendously during the initial years of teaching in the program. We would spend numerous hours after school cutting, pasting, and translating materials. I felt like we were a team. I believed that each of us contributed dually to make our classroom a functional Yup'ik immersion classroom. My education methods classes helped me understand and pass on to her the teaching pedagogy and because Yup'ik was her first language, she was able to help me slowly advance in my Yup'ik speaking skills. Not only did I depend and learn from her, but she depended and learned from me as well.

During 2007, when the newly constructed school was opened, things began to change. Continued interest in the Yup'ik Immersion Program, increased student enrollment, and the availability of extra space made it possible for my co-teacher and I to get our own classrooms. At the time, it appeared having our own classrooms would demonstrate the fact that our program was growing and therefore was doing well, so my inadequacies of being without a co-teacher were put on the backburner. Because we lacked Yup'ik language teachers, the only support I was able to get was from my teacher aide. Taking on my own classroom, in a way, meant I could be independent. It also meant that my class size would be diminished to an average number of 15 rather than an average class size of 26, which my co-teacher and I had to endure during my

first two years. Although I felt somewhat inadequate about leading my own classroom, I felt reassured by the fact that I would be working with a fluent Yup'ik speaking teacher aide. Although this new arrangement had helped with the growing number of students within the program, it ended up making me feel secluded to the point where I no longer wanted to be an immersion teacher. Having a teacher aide was not the same as working with a co-teacher. Working with a co-teacher, we were able to share the responsibilities equally. My former co-teacher and I each had our strengths. I was able to make lesson plans and structure the classroom in a way to utilize her strength of teaching in Yup'ik. I felt overwhelmed with my responsibility of teaching Yup'ik when I wasn't a fluent Yup'ik speaker, so I decided to transfer to a English classroom, which my college career had initially prepared me for. I imagined myself to be more of a productive teacher in an all-English classroom. My transfer into an all-English classroom was not because I had negative feelings toward the program. Instead my desire to exit the program stemmed from my feelings on inadequacies with the Yup'ik language. Although there were times when I felt the program could be improved, the majority of my feelings reflected my lack of confidence to lead a Yup'ik classroom. My departure from the immersion program has been bittersweet. I have been given a chance to contribute toward the language revitalization effort, yet the responsibility of leading my own classroom had left me feeling alone.

Although I left the program due to my own inadequacies, I trusted the teachers and the program enough to enroll my son and keep him in the immersion program. My son, Kevin, entered Kindergarten during my second year of teaching in the immersion

program. Because of my personal involvement within the program and because I was familiar with how hard the teachers were working, I felt confident that my son would be enjoy an effective education that would immerse him not only in his heritage language but also in the culture. The education he would be getting did not compare to the Western education I had received while growing up in the village of Naparyaraq. Instead, I felt he would be a part of something very unique and something, which was denied to not only myself, but to my mother and grandparents as well.

During his enrollment in the program, I will admit there were several times in the back of my mind, I did have my doubts as to if I was doing the right thing. My husband's insistence that our son would become mixed up or fall behind would come into my conscience when I wondered if I really was making the right decision. When I was in the program as a teacher, the lack of students' communicative competence in Yup'ik only compounded what my husband stated. My son was not performing to the level of Yup'ik I had hoped for him to be speaking. Still, I knew that there had to be an explanation for his and other students' lack of Yup'ik skills. My personal insight and dealings with the Naparyaraq Immersion Program had told me that no matter how hard the teachers were working on getting the students to speak in Yup'ik, the students just weren't speaking Yup'ik fluently. Similar to other Indigenous language programs which have started from grassroots level, the Naparyaraq Immersion Program had had it share of obstacles to overcome. Initially, the school district in which Naparyaraq resided took a while to see that the community of Naparyaraq was indeed serious about starting an immersion program. There had never been a Yup'ik Immersion

Program initiated within the Lower Yukon School District, so it is understandable as to why it took several school board meetings to initiate the immersion program. The Naparyaraq Immersion Program within the Lower Yukon School District is still currently the only immersion program of the 11 school sites.

Although four of the five teachers were not Type A qualified (BA or BS degree in Education) in the eyes of the State of Alaska, they had other "credentials" which I trusted would be used to help in the emotional, spiritual, and physical development of my child. These teachers were from Naparyaraq and had taught for an adequate number of years within the Naparyaraq School and Naparyaraq Preschool as teacher aides, bilingual teachers and pre-school teachers and were fluent in the Yup'ik language. Reflecting on this now, I admit that I did have some uncertainties about putting my son in the Immersion Program, but because my son would be able to participate in his Yup'ik culture, it overrode any negative emotions I may have felt. Reflecting on this now, I wonder if the parents who entrusted their children in my classroom had similar feelings. Although my son participated fully in his culture in the school, one thing that was apparent was his lack of Yup'ik speaking fluency. As a former teacher within the program and seeing firsthand how many of my students did not speak Yup'ik fluently, I was not surprised about my son's lack of Yup'ik fluency. I felt something was missing from our language program that was evident in other language programs.

Several years later, while contemplating a research topic during my initial year in the SLATE Master's degree program, I wanted very much for my research to

benefit the Naparyaraq Immersion Program. As a former immersion teacher within the program, I had enough insight to know that our program was young enough and understood that it had a chance to evolve into a good quality program that could produce Yup'ik speaking children. Another Yup'ik immersion program, the Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Immersion School in Bethel, had always been an example of success in many of the Naparyaraq Immersion teachers' eyes. The students at that school were fluently speaking in Yup'ik and it was apparent that getting our students to speak in Yup'ik was possible. In addition to my experiences as an immersion teacher within the program, my role as a parent of a Yup'ik immersion student and a community member made me want to do research that would benefit our program in Naparayaraq.

*Research Questions*

The main research questions, which have guided me in this research of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program were:

1) Based on immersion education research in the K-12 setting, what features considered necessary for immersion programs are currently being implemented at Naparyaraq Immersion School?

2) What discourses about the Yup'ik immersion program are being circulated by the administration and immersion teachers in the program?

Because immersion programs have different qualities and features, the question which guided this research were broadly stated so that the researcher could gather

information about only the core features that were present in the Naparyaraq Immersion Program.

*Limitations*

Because there is relatively very little research done specifically on Indigenous immersion programs, especially for the Yup'ik programs, it is hoped that this research will be beneficial to other research studies on Indigenous immersion programs.

I would also like to acknowledge that if granted and if time had allowed, I would have preferred to gather information not only from the Napayaraq Immersion teachers, but also from the teacher aides, curriculum specialist.

*Summary*

Following the introduction of this thesis, Chapter 2 will provide information on the literature, which has informed this research. Some of the literature which are unique to this research and which have supported this research includes literature on: immersion for revitalization; challenges of NCLB; language use and quality staff; and additional resources needed for immersion programs.

The information in Chapter 3 will: 1) describe what type of research this study entailed; 2) provide a motive for why I chose this study; 3) provide a description of the setting; 4) provide a description of my participants; 5) provide an explanation of who I am as the instrument of research; 6) describe the data collection methods and 7) provide an explanation of how I analyzed my data.

In Chapter 4, I will describe the data analysis and findings. Much of this chapter reveals what I as the researcher observe to be happening in the discussions during of the focus groups and interviews. I share and analyze the following themes: 1) language use; 2) success as reading and writing; 3) teacher training; 4) language use at home; 5) support; 6) success; 7) quality staff; 8) assessment; 9) need for teacher collaboration; 10) curriculum.

I share the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5. The recommendations will specifically address recommendation for the district administrators, local administrator and for the teachers of Naparyaraq. Finally, I will conclude by providing recommendations for the Naparyaraq Immersion Program and ideas for continued growth.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## *Introduction*

In this literature review, I will begin by defining immersion education. I will then explain which type of language immersion program my study entails and why it is imperative that language immersion programs be established. One area I will focus on will be immersion for revitalization. Finally, I will discuss the challenges of immersion programs. Those challenges will include: No Child Left Behind, decisions about language use, challenges of finding and retaining qualified staff, difficulty of finding appropriate resources and support from the community and district.

## *Description and features of immersion education*

According to Baker, (2006), "immersion education is an umbrella term" (p. 245). In other words, there are different types of immersion programs. How they differ is dependent upon the goals and features that guide them. For example, Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) describe six different immersion programs that fit under the immersion education umbrella, which include:

- Total or full immersion: During the first two or three years, second language used for entire day. Reading is taught using the second language. As students move up the grades, English is introduced gradually usually in grades 2 or 3.

- Partial immersion: Students are instructed in a second language part of the day. In this type of immersion program, both the first and second language are used in instruction.
- Early immersion: These types of immersion programs begin early, usually in Kindergarten and sometimes even earlier, like in Preschool.
- Late immersion: These types of immersion programs begin late, usually by the end of elementary, early middle school or high school.
- Continuing immersion: Continuing immersion programs are found in middle school or high school. The goal of continuing immersion is to maintain the language skills learned earlier in the child's school career.
- Two-Way immersion: These types of immersion programs include non native and native speakers of a particular language. These types of programs are also know as, "dual language," or "two-way bilingual."

The immersion program that my research is focused on appears to fit under Curtain and Dahlberg's (2004) definition of total or full immersion which explains that the initial years of schooling is taught only through the second language. They also go on to state that English is gradually introduced through grades two through six. Genesee (1985) adds to this definition by stating that immersion programs differ from other language programs in that the focus is on creating second language proficiency rather than on the grammar.

The most notable research on the core features that define a quality immersion program is described in Johnson and Swain (1997). These core features include:

1) All teaching and learning are done in the L2, (Yup'ik);

2) The curriculum of the L2 (Yup'ik) matches that of the curriculum of the L1 (English);

3) There are generally no negative attitudes toward the first language; therefore it is also supported;

4) The student is expected to be competent in both languages (Yup'ik and English);

5) The students' main instruction of the L2 (Yup'ik) is within the classroom;

6) Students of varying levels enter the immersion program;

7) The teachers are bilingual;

8) The classroom community culture is that of the L1 community, (which means that although Yup'ik is spoken in the classroom, the school routines and structure of the classroom curriculum and activities reflect common English practices.)

(p. 6-8)

Additional issues to consider in an immersion program that aims to aid in revitalization include examining:

1) extent of immersion during the school day

2) continuity of L2 instruction across levels within the school

3) bridging support between L1 and L2

4) teacher resources

5) commitment by school staff, faculty and administration

6) community discourse involving the culture of the target language

7) status of the L2 in the local community and larger context

8) defining what counts as success in an immersion program. (Swain & Johnson, 1997, p. 8-12)

The immersion program in my study like many other immersion programs has a degree of each or some of the core features. Depending upon a language program's purpose, it is the goals of the program that make each immersion program unique. Johnson and Swain (1997) state that immersion programs are established with the following goals in mind, 1) immersion to learn a foreign language; 2) immersion for majority-language students in minority language; 3) for language support and for language revival; and 4) immersion for survival within a society where there is a language of power.

According to Aguilera and LeCompte (2007) communities choose their own model; therefore, it would be in the best interest of the program if the community assessed the language needs and priorities. According to Reyhner and Tennant (1995) "an ideal language teaching model can emerge if all stakeholders work together with the guidance of a facilitator (p. 297). The immersion program in Naparyaraq was created with the input of teachers, community members and parents, although there was not a language expert involved in the planning. Initially, the program started with

only a Kindergarten classroom and has added one classroom each year up to grade 3. The Naparyaraq program has been a "work in progress."

Although many immersion language revitalization programs have surfaced in recent years (McCarty, 2003; Warner, 1999; Suina, 2004), little research has been written within one school setting in terms of evaluation. According to Peter and Hirata-Edds (2006), language revitalization programs are on the rise, but "there is little information available on the effectiveness of these programmes in relation to their goals, especially in terms of language proficiency among immersion participants" (p. 644). Although my initial goal for this study was to evaluate the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program based on Johnson and Swain's (1997) core features as the program now stands and not focus on the effectiveness of the program, my research proved to evolve to include immersion program effectiveness qualities. By using the teacher action research model, the focus groups, which were initiated as a result of the research question #2, have proved to be invaluable in aiding the teachers of the program to realize how the program was developing. The focus groups helped to foster an open environment, which has aided teachers' ability to see whether or not the program was effective in meeting their goals of language revitalization. As a result of the focus groups, teachers were able to look at the program as it was and discuss options to help improve the program. Specific evaluations of immersion programs developed for revitalization are needed within the literature in order to inform others wishing to initiate these unique programs. Unlike other immersion programs, immersion programs with the purpose of language revitalization are unique because in

some cases they are the last hope for many endangered languages; therefore, it is necessary to look not only to the successes of other language programs but also to their challenges.

I will refer to the core features and description explained in the above literature when evaluating the immersion program at Naparyaraq School. Specifically, the main core and variable features described in Johnson and Swain (1997) was used as a guide for this qualitative evaluation research.

*Immersion for Revitalization*

The immersion program at Naparyaraq was established primarily to revitalize the Yup'ik language. Walker and Tedick (2000) state that not all language programs are identical, instead it is "the unique features of particular language communities and the variety of factors that compromise a given school program [that] also determine that nature of immersion language programs" (p. 6). Because my community was concerned about the loss of the Yup'ik language, the overall goal of the establishment of the Naparyaraq immersion program was created with language revival in mind. Johnson and Swain (1997) state that many times immersion programs are the only option when it comes to language revitalization. In addition, they state that immersion programs may be the only choice when it comes to languages on the verge of extinction. Warner (1999) explains that the Hawaiian immersion programs were established after the "realization that the Hawaiian language and culture would not survive another generation without the creation of new child speakers of Hawaiian"

(p.74). The community in my study had many of those same concerns. According to Johansen (2004), "Native American languages, many of which have been verging on extinction, have enjoyed a revival in recent years largely due to many Native American nations' adoption of immersion programs…." (p. 566). Similarly, in my study, a group of concerned teachers and community members established the immersion program in 2002 in the hopes of replicating the successes of another Yup'ik immersion program in a nearby community. Johansen (2004) states that in many Native American communities, immersion programs are initiated as a result of grassroots efforts. The local schools are sought out as the setting in which the language revitalization takes place. Many times, like in the case of the Ayaprun Immersion School (a Yup'ik language program in Southwest Alaska, schools are credited with successful language revitalization efforts (John-Shields, 1998). In regards to the Ayaprun Immersion School, Aguilera and LeCompte (2007) state that, "in the minds of the educators in this school, Native language use in the community has been saved by the school's immersion program" (p. 21). This close to home example continues to be an inspiration to the community where my study takes place.

Although schools have proven to be a pivotal force in language revitalization, Hermes (2007) states that using a language in school does not ensure revitalization; it is only a start" (p. 62). According to this research, in order for language revitalization efforts to succeed, both the home and school should be involved. Aguilera and LeCompte (2007) support this by stating that, "Language experts agree Native-language renewal has to occur in homes and schools…" (p. 32). Schools should not be

given the sole responsibility of language renewal; instead it is necessary for the family and community to step up and take an active role. In another example, Suina (2004) explains that because Pueblo families cannot succeed in language revitalizations efforts alone, they are dependent upon their schools in the efforts to reclaim their language. Because Western culture and language has influenced and nearly taken over Indigenous communities, the school environment is believed to be an ideal environment for language revival. Although, the Pueblo, in Suina's study, made it a goal to speak the language in "the context of everyday life" in order to revive the language, they found it to be a challenge because many of the households did "not have a fluent native speaker" (Suina, 2004, p. 283). This example shows not only that the family and community cannot succeed in language revival efforts alone, but that Indigenous communities in the process of language revitalization depend heavily on the schools for language revival. Although, the school does play an important role, family and community are also needed to support the school. Maffi (2003) states that there is a risk in believing the schools can handle the "problem" (p. 73). When the schools and the community work together, the "problem" of language loss can be tackled more effectively.

*Challenges of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*

One challenge that hinders the efforts of Yup'ik language revitalization programs is continual assessments in English rather than in Yup'ik. According to Aguilera and LeCompte (2007), "the current No Child Left Behind legislation, with its

high-stakes testing and English-only mandates, impedes revitalization efforts among Indigenous groups" (p. 13). Speaking specifically about the Yup'ik language, Wyman, et al. (2010) state that the No Child Left Behind is "placing pressure on bilingual education programs and complicating language planning efforts…" (p.1). This education reform has left minority groups in the shadows. Because the No Child Left Behind stresses testing and English-only, the immersion students are at a disadvantage. Gutierrez et al. (2002) supports this by saying that "The elimination of the students' home language from the learning process has had profound and negative consequences on the viability of democratic schooling in the 21st century" (p. 329). Local school district testing requirements not only impedes the goals of language proficiency but it also interferes with the quality of classroom instruction. As Nelson-Barber and Trumbell (2007) state, "The unfortunate outcome of the NCLB legislation may well be that educators of Native students move farther away from culturally congruent curriculum, instruction, and assessment rather than increasing their use…" (p. 134). It is interesting that although the No Child Left Behind Act has been legislated to assist in the development of all students, it is instead failing to support Indigenous students in the sense that the special circumstances in which Indigenous students should be learning is being negated.

*Language Use*

One of the most important features in the immersion literature is how and when to use the target language, in the study's case, Yup'ik, and when to use English.

Peter and Hirata-Edds (2006) point out that teaching to "count to ten, name animals, identify colours and sing a few songs" should be secondary to gaining second language proficiency "to communicate their feelings, needs and wants, and to respond appropriately when spoken to" in the target language (p. 646). The major goal for language programs should be to encourage students' use of the immersion language for communicative purposes.

One important theory, which has had a profound effect on second language research is the Comprehensible Output Theory by Merrill Swain. Swain (1985) contends that the ability to speak a second language takes more that just comprehensible input. According to Johnson (2004) the premise of Swain's Comprehensible Output Theory is that as second language learners are producing the language, they "may notice a mismatch between what they know and what they do not know in the target language" (p. 52). Accordingly, "this noticed gap may raise the learner's consciousness regarding the target language forms, which otherwise may not have been noticed" (p. 52). Another important aspect of language use in immersion reflects parents and teachers concerns about students' loss of first language skills. Rather than worrying about students' first language in an immersion program, teachers should aim for additive bilingualism. Additive bilingualism results when "a person learns a second language at no cost to their first language…" (Baker, 2006, p. 4). In other words, a student will not lose ground in their first language because they are learning a new language. In contrast to additive bilingualism, subtractive bilingualism occurs when "the politics of a country favors the replacement of the home language by

the majority language" (p.4). Because students are learning through a second language, it is understandable why there are common misconceptions in regards to immersion students "falling behind." Met (1998) states that the customary belief is that "languages must be acquired one at a time in a linear, sequential fashion so as not to compete with each other and thus confuse the young learner" (p. 18). Although this belief has been popular for some time, it is no longer the norm. Today, it is not uncommon for parents of heritage language immersion school students to believe that the first language will be compromised because they are learning a second language. An illustration of this occurred with the Indigenous Sami people in Norway. Huss (2008) describes how "parents still tend to move their children to Norwegian-medium instruction after a few years in a Sami-medium class, fearing that their children will otherwise end up with fewer opportunities in higher education or on the labor market" (p. 126). Rather than causing cognitive deficiencies for language learners, there has been much evidence toward the positive cognitive benefits that result from being bilingual (Baker, 2006).

In terms of bilingualism, Rehyner and Tennant (1995) make a great point by saying, "It is not only all right to be bilingual, but it is better than being monolingual" (p. 300). In addition to bilingualism, other outcomes gained from immersion programs could include cultural awareness, cultural identity and pride. According to Hartley and Johnson (1995), language is not only "recognized as the primary vehicle for the transmission of culture and valued," but also "a vehicle for supporting and augmenting the native speakers sense of identity and self-esteem" (p. 572). In his study of a

Spanish immersion program, Kirk-Senesac (2002) also describes "high attendance rates and parent satisfaction as positive outcomes" (p. 99). Bilingualism, cultural awareness, cultural identity, pride, high attendance rates, and parent satisfaction are positive outcomes that most English language programs have failed to produced for the language minority.

*Qualified Staff*

Another core feature that has emerged in my research and has been discussed in the literature is qualified language immersion teachers. Because language revitalization is only a recent phenomenon, there has been an increased demand for Native language teachers (Siuna, 2004). Because teachers are most important in immersion programs, it is imperative that they are highly qualified in language and content knowledge. Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) state "teachers are usually the sole language models in [Immersion] classrooms" (p. 488). According to Hermes (2007) teachers not only need to know the pedagogy but also need to be highly trained in the language. Aguilera and LeCompte (2007) also state, "Native-medium instruction in core subject areas should be provided by certified teachers" (p. 32). Although one of the key features of a prototypical immersion program requires that the teachers are bilingual, it is really a challenge to find certified teachers who are bilingual in the Yup'ik language. Crawford (1998) states "Indian language speakers often lack academic credentials, while outsiders lack essential cultural and linguistic knowledge" (p. 160). When speaking of Hawaiian immersion teachers, Slaughter

(1997) states that finding trained teachers can be a challenge and at times they "must rely on provisionally certified teachers" (p. 114). That is the case of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program. Of the six teachers, four teachers had type M provisional licenses. According to Marlow (2004), the five-year provisional licenses provided are intended to involve "local experts in areas of expertise" such as "Alaska Native language or culture, military science, and vocational trades" (p. 27). In addition to finding bilingual teachers with not enough credentials teaching in immersion programs, there are also licensed educators with not enough second language proficiency. Veilleux and Bournot-Trites (2005) also says that "school districts who have hired partially qualified teachers trained to teach French as a first language need to provide second language teaching methodology in-service to ensure that the best teaching practices are being used in FI" (p. 504). Good pedagogical methods should additionally be taught to Indigenous language teachers. In terms of foreign languages, Brown (1994) states that it is challenging to find teachers who are qualified to teach not only in the elementary grades but the second language as well. Walsh (2005) states that if Indigenous groups don't have the resources and don't have skilled language speakers, language revival will be challenging. He compares it to the Irish by stating, "For those of Irish descent, it is relatively easy to become a speaker of Irish: There are abundant resources and courses" (p. 300). From the research presented, it is obvious that in order for immersion programs to succeed, quality Native language teachers are necessary.

*Additional Resources Needed for Immersion Programs*

Immersion programs that have resources for curriculum materials, administration, and community support have much more of an advantage over immersion programs that lack in those areas. When speaking of curriculum, Aguilera and LeCompte (2007) state, "Communicative competency in Indigenous languages depends largely on having everyday print materials such as newspapers, comic books, and novels readily available to students, families, and teachers" (p. 25). The presence of a rich print environment is advantageous for Indigenous language classrooms. Students need to be surrounded and exposed to the language in which they are being instructed.

In addition to curriculum support, immersion programs need the full support of the administration. Administration support, in terms of monetary support and support for training, is of value when it comes to immersion programs. According to Slaughter (1997), "The support and attitude of the principal are also factors that contribute to the success or limit the effectiveness of an immersion program" (p. 119). With the principal's support, teachers are able to schedule and observe other language teachers pedagogical methods in order to improve their own classroom instruction. A principal's positive attitude towards an immersion program also helps foster the climate for the program. In addition to support at the local level, support from the top leaders of the district support is also important. In a study of three Spanish immersion schools, Walker and Tedick (2000) point out what immersion teachers desired from the administrative level. The teachers in their study requested that the district provide

for the "unique demands" which are required of immersion program. Those demands included assistance toward "teacher hiring, student enrollment, and the continual need for time for teachers to sort out the complexity of the language and content curriculum decisions" (p. 21). Immersion teaching involves a whole new element of teaching and differs substantially from regular mainstream English classrooms. Not only does it take extra time and money, it takes much needed support from both levels of administration.

Community support is also of utmost importance to immersion programs. According to Hartley and Johnson (1995) "research stresses the importance of both native language instruction and effective community involvement in the planning and implementation of school programs" (p. 574). Elders' cultural and linguistic knowledge is also of importance in today's Yup'ik immersion class, especially since much of the traditional knowledge becoming lost. Knowledge from elders is beginning to prove to be valuable in the educational setting. According to Demmert et al. (2006) "Traditional knowledge and practices have proven to have many parallels to scientifically based information" (p. 99). In one study by Dementi-Leonard and Gilmore (1999) the goals of one project between Athabaskan elders and students proved that a cultural activity related to caribou proved that students were able to learn knowledge related to biology and "technical Athabaskan terminology, providing a rich language-learning experience for [the] schoolchildren" (p. 50). With an elder's knowledge base, teachers are able to create curriculum that extends not only enhance students' language but lessons from elders can also extend into other subject areas.

From the literature presented, it is apparent that the ability for the administration, staff, and community to work together is enhanced when all sides understand the unique aspect of immersion programs.

*Conclusion*

The literature I reviewed in this chapter has been used to provide a definition of immersion and to describe the type of immersion programs available. Because each immersion program has a very unique goal in mind, it is important to make note that this study's focus is on a total immersion program. The eight core features and ten variable features of quality immersion schools were described using Johnson and Swain (1997). These are important to note because one of the goals of my study is to see if the Naparyaraq Immersion Program in Southwest Alaska is incorporating these features and to what degree. I also shared research that demonstrates the importance of immersion programs to Indigenous communities as way to provide language revitalization, which is the case in my community. In terms of language revitalization, it was mentioned that today in a English dominated society, the only way immersion programs can have success is if the home and family are included in the process. More challenges with immersion programs were explained including the No Child Left Behind Act, decisions about language use, qualified staff and the lack of material resources were discussed. Using the information in this literature helped equip me to evaluate the Naparyaraq Immersion School and understand the challenges and successes of the program.

# Chapter 3: Design and Methods

## *Overall approach and Rationale*

This study is a qualitative case study to evaluate the Naparyaraq Immersion Program. The primary goal of the research is to understand the Naparyaraq Immersion program in relation to other immersion programs described as effective in the literature. In addition to evaluating specific qualities of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program, the perspectives of the teachers and Instructional leader will be explored. In this section, I will discuss the rationale for my research design. I will begin with how my design fits the goals and elements of qualitative research. I will then go on to provide a description of the setting where my study was conducted and who my participants were. In addition, I will give an explanation of who I am as the instrument of research. Lastly, I will describe the data collection methods and how I will analyze my data

I chose a qualitative research design as defined by Rossman and Rallis (2003) because this study is taking place in a natural setting, multiple methods were employed, the focus was on a specific context, because it was an emergent research study and because the data was interpretive. Rather than using the results of my data to prescribe recommendations on improving the Naparyaraq Immersion School Program, my research aims to provide a comparison between the Naparyaraq Immersion School and quality immersion schools as described in the literature.

My research is an evaluative case study because the findings of my research will be used to inform the school community regarding the program's effectiveness. In

addition, my research is considered a case study in that it is an in-depth and detailed exploration of one program within the Naparyaraq Immersion School.

*Qualitative Research Design*

First, I chose to use a qualitative research design because my research was conducted in a natural setting. The Naparyaraq Immersion program was evaluated as it was. I did not influence any aspect of this research as I was investigating it.

Second, multiple methods were employed during my investigation. By using a variety of inquiry tools, I was able to ensure triangulation of data. In my research, I included a range of methods, which included three focus groups, a principal interview, a lead teacher interview, a teacher interview along with three classroom observations.

Another aspect of qualitative research is to focus on a particular context. By context, I mean the researcher explores the situation as it is. This way of doing research contrasts with experimental research where the messiness of everyday school life is controlled. This research investigated the immersion program within its unique context. In no way did I manipulate any aspect of this research; instead my research details investigations within its complex natural setting.

In addition to the above, my research is qualitative because it is through my study that emerging questions begin to arise in the data analysis. Those emerging phenomenon pave the way toward further exploration to seek answers to my questions.

Finally, this qualitative research is interpretive. By this I mean that the data collection was described, analyzed and interpreted by myself, the researcher. The conclusions reached in this study are a result of how I made sense of the data collected. Although this research is interpretive and holistic, it also is systematic. This means that I followed a deliberate process of making decisions about the data and data collection. I also explained thoroughly how others might understand how the research was done and can evaluate its trustworthiness.

*Evaluative Case Study*

This research is a case study in that it describes a single setting. In my case, I explored the effectiveness of the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program. Through a variety of data collection methods, in depth and detailed knowledge was gathered in relation to the program. It is also evaluative in that the information gathered was compared to quality immersion programs described in immersion program research. In addition, I shared the information I gathered and analyzed with the school administration and teachers in the immersion program.

*Setting*

The study was conducted in a western, coastal Alaskan village called Naparyaraq. Naparyaraq's approximate population is 1,200 people. The village in the study is isolated from the road system and as a result is only accessible by airplane, boat or snow-machine. The majority of the people in the village are Yup'ik Eskimo

with the minority being Kass'aq[2]. Like other Yup'ik Eskimo communities throughout Alaska, English is becoming the dominant language; however, Yup'ik is still spoken between the older adults and elders. It is rare to see young adults speaking Yup'ik conversationally.

Due to the lack of housing availability, many of the villagers live in multi family units, sharing homes with their extended family. In some cases, children, parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents live under the same roof. The village has little economic influx with the exception of halibut commercial fishing and Native arts and crafts. The majority of villagers rely on a subsistence lifestyle. During spring and summer, families fill up their freezers and food storage caches with fish, moose meat, seal meat, berries, geese eggs and edible plants. From time to time, subsistence gathering will be poor which results in less food for families during the winter. As a result of the recent increased fuel prices, many families have had to overlook long distance trips to moose hunting camps and berry picking grounds. However, there are many families in Naparyaraq that continue to make the customary trips despite the economic hardships. Many villagers receive assistance from the government in the form of food stamps and welfare. The few jobs that are available within the village are to be found mainly at the school, clinic, tribal and city organizations. In addition, summer jobs are produced when the fishing season is healthy and when construction grants are awarded by the state to the village for road and water and sewer projects.

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[2] White, or outsider in the Yup'ik language.

The district that the school is located in consists of eleven schools. Out of the eleven schools, Naparyaraq is the only school that currently has an immersion program. People from surrounding villages have occasionally mentioned interest in starting Yup'ik immersion classes within their school, but so far haven't pushed forward. The driving force behind the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program establishment was a team made up of local teachers, community members and parents. Because the teachers, community members and parents were serious about their desires to establish an immersion program, they chartered an airplane to a regional school board meeting that was scheduled in another village and made their voices heard. From that point forward, a Kindergarten class was established and has grown today to include grades Kindergarten through Third. The school population, which includes the immersion school, English multi-age elementary school, and high school has roughly 400 students. The school is a two-story building with the Kindergarten through fifth grade classes located downstairs while the sixth through twelve grade classes situated upstairs. Although the immersion students and teachers were located within the same hallway and are distinctly labeled as an immersion program, no obvious signs designate that an immersion program exists in the school. There are no noticeable signs that advise parents or visitors to speak in Yup'ik; however, if you were to walk through the immersion wing you would see visible signs that Yup'ik culture and language dominate the classrooms. Parents who enroll their children for the first time have a choice between two Yup'ik Kindergarten classes or one English class. As such, the majority of parents choose immersion. In addition to the two

Kindergarten immersion classrooms, there were two first grade classes, one second grade class, a first and second multiage class, and a second and third multiage class. During the construction of the current school, the old school burned down. Due to fire in 2006, temporary classrooms had to be erected within different community structures, such as the traditional council and Covenant Church. Because there was a limited amount of classroom space, immersion students were mixed in with the English program students. In addition to displacing the students, the fire destroyed many Yup'ik materials which teachers had created and accumulated over six years. For that reason, the immersion teachers had to rebuild the materials that they had painstakingly worked on.

*The Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program*

The Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program has evolved over a period of seven years. It began in 2002 with a single classroom and has developed to include six contained classrooms situated within their own designated wing. Between the years of 2002-2009, the program grew from one teacher and one teacher's aide to six teachers, four teacher aides and one curriculum specialist. Of the six teachers who participated in this research, two held regular elementary teaching certificates while four of the teachers held provisional licenses. Provisional licenses are granted to teachers based upon their expertise in the Yup'ik language and are awarded to teachers at the request of school district (Marlow, 2004). Currently, the Naparyaraq Immersion program accommodates students from Kindergarten to third grade. Once students leave third

grade into the fourth grade, it is considered the transition year from Yup'ik to English. In the fourth grade transition year, students are formally taught in the English language. Rather than including Yup'ik language maintenance as part of the transition period, students in the Naparyaraq Immersion Program are abruptly immersed in the English language. Once students exit the immersion program in fourth grade, the only Yup'ik instruction they receive is from the bilingual teacher. In comparison to the Yup'ik instruction delivered in the immersion program, the bilingual program consists of forty minutes a day of Yup'ik for grades four to twelve grade. Starting in Kindergarten, many parents begin requesting that their children be placed into the Yup'ik Immersion Program. The immersion teachers have shown that they are their own distinct group by hosting yearly potlucks for the immersion students and parents and through their unique Christmas program performances depicting the Yup'ik culture. Other than meeting for a school wide collaboration meeting and the children taking state tests, the Immersion School Program is like a school within a school.

*Participants*

In this section, I will give a description of the participants in this study. In addition to providing a table to distinguish the participants, a brief description of each participant will follow. This section will give the reader more detailed information about teachers' classroom backgrounds as well as their age and position. The following table (Table 1) includes the name, age, position, certificate type, and language used in the classroom.

*Profile Description of Participants*

Table 1: Participant Profile

| **Name, age, and position** | **Class** | **Alaska State Certificate Type** |
|---|---|---|
| Sally, 51, teacher | Kindergarten | Type A & M |
| Dora, 65, teacher | Kindergarten | Type M |
| Martha ,63, teacher | 1st grade | Type M |
| Linda, 58, teacher | 2nd grade | Type M |
| Donna, 45, teacher | 2nd & 3rd | Type M |
| Mary, 65, teacher | 3rd | Type A |
| Tom, 64, Instructional leader (Principal) | N/A | Type B |

I chose the participants in my study because of their direct involvement in the Yup'ik Immersion Program. Six of the participants are teachers and one participant is the instructional leader (the instructional leader acts as a principal in the school). Because I believed that each teacher's viewpoint of the program was important to my research goals, I decided to seek out all the teachers in the program. It is interesting to note that all of the participants in my study, with the exception of one, are female and are Yup'ik Eskimo. Their ages range from 46 years old to 65 years old. Four of the teachers hold Type M teaching certificate, which is a specialized certificate given to

Alaska Native language speakers who have shown that they are competent to teach the language. One teacher has a Type A certified Elementary degree. Only one teacher has both a Type A and Type M teaching certificates. Lastly, the instructional leader holds a Type B degree, which is required by all school administrative employees. It is also important to note that all participants excluding the instructional leader are from Naparyaraq. The instructional leader, who is male, is the only participant who is Kass'aq. He moved to Naparyaraq in 1986 with his wife, who is Yup'ik Eskimo and who is from Naparyaraq. The instructional leader has had experience in the Naparyaraq community not only as the instructional leader, but also as a high school teacher and City Council member. Very few Kass'aqs have come into Naparyaraq and have made it their home like he has. The instructional leader and his wife have raised their children and grandchildren in Naparyaraq.

As a reader of this research and in order to understand the unique context of this research, I would like to mention that many of the teachers in this research have had to leave Naparyaraq in order to advance their education. Several of the teachers have had to temporarily sacrifice their cultural and traditional lifestyle in order to obtain their degrees. The absence of higher education within rural communities requires that individuals wishing to pursue specialized degrees leave the village. Due to the lower cost of living and luxuries of city life, some people do not return to the village once they have left. The six immersion teachers' strong ties to the community and their families have in a way obliged them to return to their village to teach their people.

*My Role as a Researcher*

My role as researcher is unique and important as I have close and personal connections to my study. My interest in this research stems mainly from my past involvement in the Naparyaraq Immersion Program as an immersion teacher during the years of 2004-2007. It is through my involvement with the program during that time that I was able to be a personal participant, which allowed me to observe the daily discourses occurring within the Yup'ik Immersion Program. During 2004, when I graduated from Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage, Alaska, I applied for a job in Naparyaraq, which is where I am originally from. My intention had always been that once I graduated with a grade K-6 Teaching endorsement, I would return to my hometown to raise my family and teach. When I applied for a job, I was told that the only position available at the time for my licensure was a first grade position in the Yup'ik Immersion Program. Since I was not a fluent speaker of Yup'ik and had only passive knowledge, I did not expect to be hired by the Naparyaraq School. As a child growing up, my grandparents and mother spoke Yup'ik mostly to each other and on occasion to me, but had not expected me to speak to them in their first language. My grandparents were a part of the generation that had been brought up in Catholic missionary schools, which placed greater emphasis on Western education and culture than on the Yup'ik culture. They were told that in order to survive in today's world, they had to be knowledgeable about the English language. The Yup'ik language was not thought of as a language used for economic gains. As a result, they did not stress to me that Yup'ik was an important language to learn. Speaking to them using the

English language was the norm and most often they communicated back in English. Because very few villagers return to their communities after receiving their degrees and because normally very few villagers obtain degrees, the board hired me with the hopes that I would improve on my speaking ability. I knew the board was interested in me returning to my community to teach so they accommodated me by allowing the bilingual teacher to co-teach with me. Although I was confident in the bilingual teacher, I still felt uncomfortable in my position as the 1st grade Yup'ik immersion teacher. For example, one day I made my insecurities known to a regional school board member by telling him that I felt scared at my new role as the 1st grade immersion teacher. I felt very inadequate in my new position because I believed that the Yup'ik Immersion students deserved a fluent Yup'ik speaking teacher who could effortlessly immerse the children in the Yup'ik language. His response was, "If the children learn just a few Yup'ik words a day, that will be adequate." The month after I was hired, I was expected to attend a Yup'ik Language Institute Program, which would hopefully help me to develop my language skills. While I enrolled in Yup'ik classes and co-taught with the former bilingual aid, I was able to teach in the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program. Although, there were many times when I questioned my abilities, I believed as a classroom teacher, I was doing a great job. Unfortunately, when it came to my role as a Yup'ik language teacher, I felt uneasy and many times had asked myself if I was being effective as a language teacher. The research questions, which have guided my research study are a result of my personal connection to the immersion program as a former teacher and a parent of an

immersion student. The big question that I sought in this research directly relates to that personal question of whether or not I was doing a good job but it also contrasts in that I am looking holistically at the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion School by comparing it to current immersion education research in the K-12 setting. I would also like my readers to know that I am looking specifically at the key features noted in the literature that are considered necessary for effective programs.

*Data Collection Methods*

In my research of the Naparyaraq Immersion School, I have used several data collection methods. Over a six-month period, individual interviews were conducted with the Instructional leader3, immersion lead teacher and one teacher. In addition, 3 focus groups were carried out in my classroom. Finally, three classroom observations were conducted to see the Yup'ik immersion teachers and children within the Naparyaraq Immersion context. I will give a rationale for each research method and a description of how the data was collected through this method. The following table summarizes the data sources.

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[3] The Instructional leader is a word used for the term principal in other public school settings.

Table 2 Data Sources

| **Data Sources** | **Participants** | **Time** |
|---|---|---|
| Semi-structured one-on-one interviews (1 each with follow up) | Lead Teacher<br>Instructional leader | 45 minutes<br>45 minutes |
| Focus Group Interviews (3) | All immersion teachers | 1 hour each |
| Classroom Observations | Immersion teachers (3 from different grade levels) | 1-2 hours each |
| Field notes | All aspects of program | On-going weekly notes based on conversations, interviews, observations in and out of classrooms |

*Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are a method in which the interviewer seeks answers to detailed questions that require more detail and is more personal than a questionnaire. "In depth interviewing is the hallmark of qualitative research. Talk is essential for understanding how participants view their worlds" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 180). Interviews allow the flexibility of the interviewer to ask for specific details or discuss certain issues that might be sensitive to some of the participants. I chose to use interviews in my qualitative evaluative case study because as Sewell (1999) has pointed out they are ideal for understanding the viewpoints and decisions of the participants.

The interviews were appropriate to my qualitative evaluative case study because I was able to get more in-depth personal thoughts and answers from the key players in the immersion program, which included the instructional leader and the lead teacher. In my research, it was important to do interviews to understand the key players' perspective regarding the Yup'ik immersion program to see if similar perspectives and/or thought patterns existed, and if they did, to try to understand them within the context.

I conducted one forty-five minute interview with the instructional leader in the teacher's lounge. The teacher's lounge, which was located within a few feet from the main office, was a gathering room for staff members to get their morning coffee, eat lunch, and use the restrooms. When making arrangements for the interview, the instructional leader stated to me that he preferred this time and place because he usually made coffee for the school staff before they arrived to work. For this interview, I prepared a list of open-ended questions and recorded the conversation using a tape recorder. The instructional leader occasionally got up to attend to the coffee while I sat at the table asking the questions. During this time, he was still answering the question. There were several instances when teachers would pass through to use the restroom or help themselves to coffee, but the instructional leader didn't appear bothered by this, as he continued to answer my questions. Later on, when the interview ended, he offered to add more clarification on any questions and said he would be more than happy to meet with me again in a much more private

room, if I preferred. I was pretty much satisfied with the interview and felt that I did not need to go back for clarification.

The second interview was with the lead immersion teacher in the program. I told the lead immersion teacher who also happens to by my mother-in-law to meet me in my room right after we dismissed the students for the day. Originally when I planned my research, I had questioned myself and wondered if my mother-in-law's participation would affect my ability to remain objective. As a researcher, I felt by involving my mother-in-law in this research, the readers of my research would see how closely related I was to one of the participant and as a result question my ability to remain objective. Because this thought consumed me, I believe in the end, my mother-in-law's participation did not cloud my ability to understand the program as a whole, but instead added to my attentiveness regarding this matter. Because my mother-in-law played an important role in the Naparyaraq Immersion Program, I felt by allowing her to participate, I would get a more dynamic understanding of the program. When the interview was conducted the lead teacher and I sat face-to-face around two student desks. The Zoom H2 recorder was positioned in between us. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. When the interview ended, the lead teacher asked me if the answers she provided were adequate and to the point. I assured her that she provided important information that I was pleased with her input regarding the immersion program.

*Focus Group Interviews*

I chose to use focus groups because a lot of information can be elicited from many participants within a short period of time. In addition, they were also appropriate to my research because each of the participants had an active role in the immersion program. By coming together as a group in three different sittings, they were able to collectively share information regarding the immersion program. Mills (2003) points out that, "focus groups are a particularly useful technique when the interaction between individuals will lead to a shared understanding of the questions being posed by the [researcher]" (p. 65). Through my research, I conducted three focus groups within a five-month period. As I was conducting the focus group interviews, I was able to find out the teachers' perspectives as key players in the immersion program. They were able to provide information about how they viewed the program successes, and how it could be improved.

For all three focus groups, I used a Zoom H2 Handy Portable Stereo Recorder. I had prepared the questions for each focus group beforehand. The first focus group included five of the six original participants. One of the participants was not in school that day due to being ill. Before the focus group, I got permission from the lead instructor to conduct the focus group in my classroom on Wednesday afternoon. This day was ideal for the teachers because students are released early that day so that staff could collaborate. The instructional leader was very supportive and gave his permission. As motivation for the teachers to participate, I told them I would bring in some akutaq (Eskimo ice cream) and dried fish. One teacher, jokingly responded, "Are

you trying to bait us with food!" In addition to providing the teachers an incentive, my intention of bringing the akutaq and dried fish was not only as my way of repaying them for their time and input, but also as a way to break the tension. In our culture, traditional foods are a way to not only satisfy the body but also as a way to connect people together. I wanted the participants to feel comfortable enough and safe enough to share their thoughts and ideas. In addition, I brought in the food because I was feeling very uncomfortable at the thought of asking my participants intrusive questions. Because all of the participants are older than me and because the Yup'ik culture places importance on valuing and respecting elders, I did not feel too comfortable to lead a focus group and be the one to ask probing questions. This feeling of apprehensiveness continued to follow me throughout all of the focus groups. When the teachers came into my room, many of them were very appreciative of the food. It was after they were finished, that I began the focus group. During the interview, the teachers were situated at the students' desks. Without thinking, I sat at the front of the room. During the focus group, I noticed a couple teachers who weren't freely providing insights into my questions.

The second focus group included the original participants, in addition to two new participants; the Yup'ik Immersion curriculum specialist and a Yup'ik Immersion Kindergarten teacher aide. Initially when the study was proposed, the plan was that my research would only consist of the six immersion teachers and instructional leader. It was only later, when I conducted the second focus group that the Yup'ik Immersion curriculum specialist and the Yup'ik Immersion Kindergarten teacher were involved

in the research. Before the actual focus group, I sent out an email reminding the original participants that we would have the second focus group in my classroom after the staff collaboration meeting. The two new participants (Yup'ik Immersion curriculum specialist and Kindergarten teacher aide) realized we were having a meeting and decided to join us. Even though they were not formally invited, it was obvious that their group identification and membership to the Yup'ik immersion group compelled them to attend the focus group. Because I felt it was inappropriate to send them away, I instead encouraged them to join us. I let them know that I was conducting research on the immersion program and they were welcome to share in the food and discussion. Throughout the focus group, the two guests contributed fairly little.

The third focus group was held again in my classroom with five of the original six participants, in addition to the Yup'ik Immersion Curriculum Specialist and Kindergarten teacher aide. Dorothy was absent from this focus group because there was a death in her family. As the first Yup'ik Immersion teacher who piloted the Naparyaraq immersion program, her familiarity with the program was vital in my research; therefore, I scheduled an individual interview with her for a later date. Akutaq and fish were brought in once again to the delight of the participants. During the third focus group, the participation from the curriculum specialist and the Kindergarten teacher was unlike before in that they were more verbal with their responses, and at times, provided some insight into their perspectives as the Yup'ik Immersion Curriculum Specialist and Kindergarten teacher aide.

*Classroom Observations*

As a former Yup'ik immersion teacher, I was able to observe the immersion program with both etic and emic eyes. While I currently do not teach in the immersion program, I am still a teacher at the school site and have had experience teaching in the case study's program for three years. Observations are key in my research as they "take you inside the setting; [they] help you discover complexity in social settings by being there" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 194). Since my study involves the evaluation of one school's immersion program, I needed to be able to understand many layers of the setting. As the researcher, observations allowed me to view everyday occurrences within the program. I was able to see how the students and teachers interacted in the classroom and from those observations was able to make inferences about the teachers' underlying values and community practices. I was able to contribute to my knowledge as a former immersion teacher to make sense of what was going on in the classroom. Now that I am a mainstream teacher of English, I can provide my perspective as an outsider.

The first classroom observation took an hour and a half and consisted of a 1st grade classroom of 18 students. Because MaryAnne was a former Yup'ik language mentor and a former co-teacher of mine, I felt comfortable enough to approach her for a classroom observation. Out of the six teachers, she was a participant who I was primarily interested in because although she was not a state certified teacher, she had 30+ years teaching experience and was in the process of obtaining a Yup'ik degree. I chose MaryAnne because she had much more teaching experience and additionally

because she was one of the older teachers in the group. As I thought, she was more than willing to contribute to the study. As we were planning the observation in advance, she asked me if there was anything specific that I wanted to observe. My response was that I was more concerned about observing her at her convenience and that I wasn't really looking for anything in particular. I made it known that I just wanted to observe her classroom as it was. The day before the observation, when I telephoned her to remind her that I would be coming to her classroom the next day, she sounded quite excited. The next day, I spent approximately an hour and a half observing her classroom during their calendar time and reading block.

Like my first classroom observation, the second observation was scheduled in advance and involved a different teacher. For this observation I chose Sally because I knew she was also an experienced teacher with twenty-five plus years of experience teaching in the classroom. She differed from MaryAnne in that she had a state licensed teaching degree and was in the process of obtaining a Masters degree in Applied Linguistics. My observation in this class lasted approximately an hour and a half also.

These observations provided insights into the immersion program's context. They also allowed me another set of data beyond teachers' reports about the context of the classroom as a way to compare it to classroom contexts in the immersion program literature.

*Field Notes*

Rossman and Rallis (2003) defines field notes as, "the written record of [my] perceptions in the field" (p. 195). Throughout my research, I took field notes in order to document concise details of what I observed. As a researcher, my goal was to include as many intricate details as possible. As a result, I tried to be as mindful as I could in my daily interactions. Rossman and Rollis further explain that the second element of field notes is that they include the researcher's "emotional reactions to events, analytical insights, questions about meaning, and thoughts for modifying your design" (p. 196). Therefore, in addition to my observations, I included my impressions of what I saw on the immersion wing's walls, conversations I overheard, comments made by school staff regarding the immersion program and comments made by the children's parents.

From these notes, I expanded the description to include emotions, details, specifics about the events and artifacts that I saw. Geertz (1973) explains that these notes are considered "thick descriptions." In order to conform to Gertz's definition of "thick descriptions," I entered my handwritten field notes into the computer and provided additional details, in order to generate a clearer image of the context where my research took place.

*Data Analysis*

Using the constant-comparative method as described by Strauss and Corbin, 1990, I first coded the data I gathered from interviews, and focus groups. After the

initial coding, I revisited the data in order to narrow my focus. Soon after the second coding, I continued to organize my data into more specific categories as possible. It was interesting to see that the specific categories also branched off into other subset categories. As a researcher, I found it necessary to continually look at my data categories and continue to refine the data where needed, therefore, I changed the initial list into a even more narrower categories by combining categories that I noticed belonged together.

By sharing the setting and information about the participants as well as the data I gathered, I was able to understand the immersion program in more depth. The four different methods that I used in my investigation helped me to triangulate the data toward my end goal of the evaluation the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program. The main themes that emerged from my research will be described in my next chapter.

The conclusion of this chapter has provided evidence of the qualitative aspects that distinguish this research from other types of research. It also described a detailed description of the methods employed during this research. In addition, information was presented in regards to participants' backgrounds as well as the background of the researcher.

# Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

## *Introduction*

In this chapter, I will discuss the analysis of the data which was collected for the research question: Investigating a Yup'ik Immersion Program: What Determines Success? The reader should be reminded that the data for this research question was collected from the Naparyaraq teachers and instructional leader through focus groups, interviews, classroom observations and field notes. The major themes which emerged from the research will be discussed in the following order: Language Use, Language Use at Home, Support, Success, Quality Staff, Assessments and Curriculum.

## *Language Use*

During the focus group discussions, teachers described the amount of Yup'ik versus English that was being used by the teachers and students. It is apparent by looking at the table below that teacher language use in the Yup'ik language decreases as the grade gets higher. This decrease in Yup'ik language use is correlated to Curtain and Dahlberg's definition of total immersion.

Table 3: Teacher's reports of Yup'ik spoken

| **Teacher** | **Grade** | **Approximate Percentage of Yup'ik spoken by teachers in classroom** | **Approximate Percentage of Yup'ik spoken by children in classroom** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sally | Kindergarten | 90% | 2% |
| Dora | Kindergarten | 90% | 10% |
| Martha | 1st | 75% | 5% |
| Linda | 1st and 2nd | 75% | 5% |
| Donna | 2nd and 3rd | 75% | 5% |
| Mary | 3rd | 60% | 10% |

Interestingly, although teachers reported using the Yup'ik language in their conversation and instruction in the classroom a high percentage of the time, they reported less Yup'ik use by their students. During the focus group meetings, it was revealed that many of the teachers felt that getting the students to use the Yup'ik language was a struggle. For example, Donna stated, "Most of my kids speak in English. They don't know how to speak in Yup'ik." (focus group #3, February 18, 2009). This is important because although the students in her classroom have had at least two years of Yup'ik language instruction, they are not using the language as expected. According to Curtain and Dahlberg, (2004), one distinction of immersion programs is that students are supposed to move "rather automatically into speech production" (p. 280). Walker and Tedick (2000) add to this by saying, at first it is

acceptable for Kindergarteners to speak to their peers in English, but with time spent in the immersion students naturally use more of the target language. Martha, a 1st and 2nd grade teacher, described her frustrations in getting students to speak in Yugtun (the word for the Yup'ik language) when she stated, "The hardest struggle for me is the children, we speak to them in Yup'ik. They speak to us in English." (focus group #3, February 18, 2009). Her experience in the classroom provides evidence that although she is committed to using the language in the classroom, the children are not communicating back in Yugtun.

During my research, I was able to observe what the immersion teachers had described. Before I discuss this, I would like to remind the reader of my unique role in this research. My role as a researcher not only gave me the perspective of an outsider, but it also gave me an insider's perspective; as a teacher within the school and a former teacher in the immersion program. Because I was a teacher within the school, it was easy for me to leave my students with my teacher aide in the computer lab while they were typing up their reports. Overall, my presence in the immersion classrooms did not appear to be a distraction. In an attempt to show respect to the teachers and to make sure they were comfortable, I made sure to schedule an observation at their convenience. It was interesting to see that all of the teachers invited me during the morning, which was when the students would be doing the Yup'ik Pledge, the Yuuyaraq (rules for Yup'ik Way of Life teachings) the calendar and weather. Because all three teachers invited me to visit their classrooms during this time, it suggested to me that this was a time when students would be most successful with Yugtun. I sensed

that teachers wanted to show me that students were successfully using the Yup'ik language. Later on during a focus group, Mary, the third trade transition teacher gave evidence of how well students were able to perform during this time when she said,

> They recognize like if were doing calendar, "Qiallun ernerpak cillaput ayuqa?" (How is the weather today?) And they say, "Anuqlirtuq. Akercirtuq." (It is windy. It is sunny.). They know all the terms, weather terms in Yugtun and English too. (focus group #1, October 15, 2009).

Dora also stated that,

> Calendaraqamta elicariaqamta respondafkanaaqluki Yugtun" (When we are learning during calendar time, I encourage them respond in Yup'ik)." (focus group #1, October 15, 2009).

Mary and Dora's comments suggest that although students were speaking in Yugtun, they were only able to respond with short answers. During my classroom observation, I personally observed this during calendar time when Dora asked the children, "Iralissun cauwa" (What is the month?) to which the students responded with the correct month. In Martha's classroom, I continued to notice this when Martha asked the students, "Cakuciugat naruyat mingui?" (What kind of color do seagulls have?) to which the students responded, "Qatelria" (White). These observations led me to believe that although the students were speaking in Yugtun, it did not appear that they

were using it spontaneously for genuine communication. Rather they were using it to answer direct questions posed by the teacher that generally could be answered with one word or a short phrase. For the immersion teachers, the morning routine appeared to be an important part of the day because it was a time when students would gather at the usual spot and were given an opportunity to respond in Yugtun. At times when students weren't near the calendar, like for example when they were sitting doing group work, I noticed that although students uttered basic Yup'ik words. Overall, they preferred to speak in English to each other.

Through the observations and comments, it became apparent that teachers were having difficulty getting the students to speak Yugtun. The immersion teachers appeared to be aware that students weren't performing as expected. Several teachers were aware that students in the Ayaprun Immersion Program, the model program in Bethel, were speaking Yugtun without difficulty. Teachers concerns and the absence of Yugtun being spoken during other times of the day suggested that teachers needed additional training in regards to second language production. Although there is a need for more research on the best "instructional practices that promote second language learning in immersion classrooms" (Akcan, 2004, p. 267), Akcan believes that "teachers should model target language structures and expect the children to use these language patterns within various learning contexts" (p. 272.) Swain (1988) believes that "opportunities to produce sustained output in the second language are crucial to the second language learning process" (p.70). Although the teachers were dedicated to using the Yup'ik language consistently, the classroom observations appeared to yield

very little evidence of opportunities in which students engaged in language production.

*Success means reading and writing in Yup'ik*

More evidence pointing toward students' lack of oral performance in Yugtun appeared when teachers were asked to describe what success meant as it related to the immersion program. Instead of describing success in terms of Yup'ik language speaking, it was interesting to see that most of the teachers pointed out their students' reading and writing skills. For example, Martha stated,

> For me, success is when a parent comes in and asks me, ' You know what my child wrote in Yup'ik today?' They are so proud that their children are learning how to use the Yup'ik language and write it down. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

When the discussion of success continued, it was obvious how much Sally, the Kindergarten teacher, also valued Yup'ik reading and writing.

> She's five years old and she knows the letters of the alphabet and the sounds. When I ask her, 'What things do you see around here or at home that begin with [c] or [p]?' she names them correctly and I think that's from what I have done in my classroom. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

From the focus group discussion, it was apparent that when defining success, teachers pointed out their students reading and writing skills more often than their Yup'ik speaking skills. The emphasis towards students reading and writing skills showed

teachers were being successful in Yup'ik reading and writing. Because teachers rarely discussed students Yup'ik speaking, it gave the impression that teachers were struggling in that area. As a former teacher within the program, my experience going into the program without any knowledge of the best teaching for second language learners meant that I had to learn as I went along. I believe many of the teachers in the program were experiencing the same thing.

During the same focus group, it became apparent that teachers were not the only ones who viewed Yup'ik reading and writing as important. Through teacher's perspectives, it was evident that the immersion parents also viewed Yup'ik reading and writing as important. Linda, the first and second grade teacher, described how one parent praised her son's Yup'ik reading skills when she said,

> You know how there are some newspaper articles that are written in Yup'ik? Because the child's mom couldn't read in Yup'ik, she had her son read the whole thing to her. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

During a casual conversation with an immersion parent, I learned first-hand what one parent viewed as important. The parent who happened to be my substitute aide for the day confided to me, "My daughter is better than me when it comes to Yup'ik reading and writing." (field notes, February 18, 2009). As we continued talking, it was obvious how proud this parent was of her daughter's reading and writing ability. The comments by teachers and parents prove that although authentic communication was not occurring, there was a considerable amount of value towards students' Yup'ik reading and writing skills.

Because the Yup'ik language is considered an oral language, it was interesting that the immersion teachers and parents emphasized students' reading and writing. Today, in the community of Naparyaraq, the elders who do communicate in Yugtun mostly do so through speaking. With the exception of Yup'ik writing observed in church books, Yup'ik reading and writing very rarely is seen in the community. Because Yup'ik reading and writing does not appear to be significantly useful in the Yup'ik culture, it is interesting why immersion teachers and parents are placing high value on Yup'ik reading and writing. Part of the reason towards this inconsistency could be contributed to Western education values. Instead of placing high importance on oral language, it appears the teachers and parents are valuing what Western education deems important and that is reading and writing. During the struggle for language revitalization, it appears that the Naparyaraq teachers and parents have come to adopt values similar to those of the Western culture. Rather than adopting the values of Western education, the immersion teachers and parents need to remain true to the culture by focusing mostly on language speaking. By placing focus on Yup'ik speaking, the immersion students will be able to use Yup'ik for authentic purposes. In this case, they could use Yugtun to communicate with Yup'ik speakers in the community.

*Teacher training*

During the investigation, it was evident that although teachers were proficient in the Yup'ik language, they did not have the proper language training. Throughout

the focus groups and interviews, the teachers continually brought up the need for more training. For example, during a cultural performance in Bethel, Martha got a chance to observe students from the Ayaprun Immersion School conversing fluently in Yup'ik. Her comments during our focus groups reflect that she understood that the only way she could improve students' language use is if she received the necessary training. She stated,

> I observed at Camai festival, the children up [on stage] talked only in Yup'ik. I haven't been to one of their sessions but I need to go to one to get a good idea of how that should be done within our classrooms. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009.

Martha's statement shows that she is aware that language teaching requires specialized training. It appears that the lack of training within the Naparyaraq immersion school is impeding students' progress. Not only did Martha believed training could help improve the program but she also believed they were working hard when she stated, "We need to use our language more and get trained in that area. But I think we are doing our best" (focus group #3, February 18, 2009). From my classroom observations and because my classroom is within close proximity to the immersion classrooms, I agreed with Martha. During my observations, I noticed that even though some students would "qitevteq" (speak in English when they need to speak in Yugtun) the teachers would continue to speak Yugtun. The teachers whom I observed were relentless when it came time to model Yugtun. Although the teachers did their best to model the Yup'ik language, the concept most noticeably absent in the classrooms was

meaningful opportunities that allowed for students to engage in Yugtun. According to Echevarria et al. (2008), meaningful interaction is one of the key components for making content comprehensible for language learners. During my three classroom observations, students appeared to mostly participate in rote and repetitive learning, although in one classroom, I observed students attempting to code-mix in Yugtun during center time in a more constructivist way. Because the classroom observations showed a lot of rote and repetitive learning, it could be assumed that the teachers tendencies toward this type of pedagogy was being reflected in their classrooms because this was the only kind of teaching they were familiar with. Also, the teachers have not been formally been instructed in second language instruction, so the teaching they were most familiar with was demonstrated in their classrooms. The teachers did not have constructivist pedagogical training on how to teach second language learners, so many struggled to get students to speak in Yugtun. Two of the teachers gave insight into students' Yup'ik language use and described how getting the students to speak in Yugtun was a challenge. Mary stated,

> Here the small kids are [speaking in kassatun (English)] to us so as an adult we have to tell them, 'Yugtun qanerluci yugturrlainaq' (Speak in Yup'ik, in Yup'ik only) you know if your teaching. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

Donna gave additional evidence of students' preference toward English when she said, "Most of the time [the students] speak English and I try to encourage them to talk in Yugtun" (focus group #1, October 15, 2009). It is apparent from Donna and Mary's comments that students' preference toward using English could not be broken.

Although the teachers provided the proper modeling and encouraged students to speak in Yugtun, it did not appear to be enough. According to Diaz-Rico and Weed (1995) students need to be allowed to participate in meaningful language activities, which promote language use. In order for this to happen, the district needs to support teachers and provide second language training.

Because teachers were constantly encouraging students to speak in Yup'ik and because they put forth every effort to get students to speak in Yugtun, one teacher questioned if the transition period was too sudden. Due to the fact that the Naparyaraq Immersion Program accommodates students up to the third grade and then transition into full-time English in the fourth grade, one teacher appeared to question whether students needed extra time to learn in Yup'ik. It appeared that she believed the third grade cut off was too soon and appeared to question if that was the reason students weren't speaking in Yup'ik as she believed they should be. During an interview, Dora questioned students' progress and even appeared to doubt the goals of the program when she stated,

> I know like a lot of the students who are like third, fourth, fifth or sixth grade. Right now they don't seem to really be speaking in Yugtun. You know? Like we just let them go, transition them right away. What was the use of the Yup'ik that they learned in kindergarten, first, second grade? (personal interview, September 27, 2009)

Dora's experience as an eight-year immersion teacher told her that something was not right. Not only did she feel the transition to English was too abrupt but she also

appeared to believe the Yup'ik learned in the lower grades amounted to nothing for the former immersion students who were now in the higher grades.

As a researcher it was exciting to see that as a result of the focus groups and interviews, teachers were coming to a consensus and acknowledging students' inability to speak in Yup'ik. Although they did not know exactly why, it was important for them to have a dialogue and look for ways of improvement.

*Language Use at Home*

Even though the focus of this study is on language use within the school, one of Johnson and Swain's (1997) core features examines language use within the home. She describes the importance of how the community views the target language that is taught in the schools. Because the relationship between the community and school is vital, I also spoke to the participants about the role of the home in the Yup'ik languages efforts. As the context of this research was situated in a rural Yup'ik Eskimo community, it was not unusual to find that the majority of immersion teachers had some of their own children, grandchildren, nieces and/or nephews in their classrooms. When questioned about Yup'ik language use in the community as opposed to language use within the school, it was interesting to see how teachers' beliefs contrasted in regards to the different environments. When discussing Yup'ik language use in the classroom, Martha, who had several grandchildren in her class, commented, "I think if we have to teach Yup'ik in our classrooms, it has to be all Yup'ik. All Yup'ik. No English" (focus group #3, February 18, 2009). In addition,

Mary supported this by stating, "We have to demand that they speak [Yup'ik] all the time" (focus group #3, February 18, 2009). It is interesting to see that although Martha and Mary believed strongly about Yugtun in the school, they did not appear overly concerned about using Yugtun in the community. When asked which language was mostly used within the community, Mary, whose grandson was in her class commented, "I notice several people that are older than me, they're speaking in English to their grandchildren. Me too." (focus group # 2, November 5, 2009). Mary's comment tells us that when it came to speaking Yugtun at home, she tended to speak in English even to her grandson, who was in her class. Donna, who had two children and two grandchildren in the immersion program showed how easily she gave in to speaking English at home when she said, "I speak the two languages, Yup'ik and English interchangeably, but if I can't say the words in Yugtun, I do them in English." (focus group #2, November 5, 2009). Donna, who was one of the younger immersion teachers described that when she didn't know the word for certain things, she easily resorted to English. She expressed the idea that people don't choose to speak Yup'ik because it's overwhelming. The idea is that it is the school's responsibility. The sentiment is, "It is too hard for us to speak Yugun in the community, but make sure you teachers speak it." The comments made by both Mary and Donna are important to this research because they demonstrates how valuable the school setting is when it comes to Yup'ik language revitalization. Within the school environment, teachers appeared not only more consistent when speaking the Yup'ik language but they also appeared to have more support for each other. On the other hand, speaking Yup'ik in

the home and/or community proved to be more of a challenge and the community does not seem committed yet to make a united effort to change.

*Support*

When the topic of support was addressed, the majority of the teachers with the exception of one believed that the instructional leader was supportive of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program. Sally, who worked as a kindergarten immersion teacher for five years and who had worked under the leadership of three previous instructional leaders, gave more insight into his support.

> I believe this is the first year since I started working here that our local administration has supported us a hundred percent and I think he's trying his best to help us take more control over our own program. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009).

Mary gave further evidence of the instructional leader's support when she said, "I agree that we have more support from the administration here." As a teacher in the school, I agreed with Sally that, as the instructional leader, Tom was making an effort to give more control to the immersion teachers. Not only did he appear to support the teachers emotionally, but he also encouraged the teachers to organize parent meetings. During the meetings, rather than acting as an authoritative figure, Tom appeared to write down what the immersion teachers and parents had to say. I got a sense that because he believed in local control and because he respected the perspectives of the teachers and parents, who were all from Naparyaraq, he took what they had to say into

account. During a one-on-one interview, he gave evidence of his support for all the immersion teachers who were from Naparyaraq when he said,

> Even though they don't have the quote unquote credentials that a Type A would bring to somebody, I think in effect they have a higher level of skills that a lot of Western teachers that come into the school. Whether they're teaching in you know the English language program or not, they know the community, they know the parents, they know the kids, a lot of time they're related to them they know how they learn. They know the problems that they face at home and in the community and so they're very effective teachers. (personal interview, September 27, 2009)

Because Tom had been apart of the Naparyaraq school community for quite some time, he was observant enough to know what worked for our school. He understood that just because the immersion teachers did not have "proper" credentials, it didn't mean they were not qualified to teach the students of Naparyaraq. He understood that the immersion teachers' backgrounds proved to be an advantage over other teachers who are not from Naparyaraq. I believe his observant nature helped him to be open and understanding to the teachers' needs. I believe that his ability to "lend an ear" and work with teachers was a quality that the immersion teachers valued. Because I personally observed Tom to be an instructional leader who was willing and ready to work with teachers' to overcome obstacles, it was interesting to see that Dora saw otherwise. Dora, who wasn't available during the third focus group, voiced her concerns during an interview. She explained, "Before he became the administrator, he

seemed very supportive and all. Right now we don't seem to have any support whatsoever" (personal interview, September 27, 2009). One explanation why Dora saw a decline in the instructional leader's support could be due to the extra duties that entailed being an instructional leader. Before he became the instructional leader, Tom had been one of the key figures involved in the establishment of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program. After he became the instructional leader, Tom's presence wasn't as visible. One reason as to why Tom wasn't as visible as he once was could be related to the fact that in some peoples' eyes, Tom was now viewed as the "person in charge." As the "person in charge," Tom may have been expected to act more authoritatively. Because Tom's leadership style centered more toward a democratic approach, it appeared Tom wanted the teachers and community to discuss the goals of the program without being intimidated by his presence. During a follow up conversation with Tom in which he was asked to describe his leadership style, Tom made it clear that he believed more in a stewardship approach, in which the leadership came from and was distributed among all of the teachers (phone interview, October 15, 2009). Because the past instructional leaders had leadership styles that were opposite to Tom's leadership style, it appeared to Dora that he was not as invested.

One last reason as to why Tom was seen as unsupportive could be related to the fact that some of the district directives, which he had to convey to the Naparyaraq staff did not always apply and benefit the immersion program. Instead of benefiting the immersion program, some of the directives would instead cause unnecessary duties for the immersion teachers. For example, because the school was on a plan of

improvement, all teachers in the school were required to continuously test students in reading and math. Since the testing was mandatory and could only be done in English, some of the Yup'ik immersion teachers felt frustrated and believed it was unfair to give the immersion students a test in English. Even though many of the immersion teachers made their frustrations known, in reality, nothing could be done. Because his job required him to follow orders from the district, Tom really didn't have a choice when it came to following and giving the orders. According to Aguilera and LeCompte, (2007), "revitalization of Indigenous languages has been difficult to implement because of overwhelming pressure to teach English and the recent emphasis on high-stakes testing in English...." (p. 12). During my interview with Tom, it was apparent that as the instructional leader, he was supportive not only for the Yup'ik immersion program but also for the Yup'ik people as a whole. During the interview, I could see that Tom was aware of the educational challenges that the Yup'ik people faced. Not only was he aware of the challenges but he also believed the Yup'ik people deserved education tailored to their unique needs. He explained,

> Native people need to be active in demanding that their culture and their language is valued in the school system. If that means separating off from the Western school system than maybe that's what they need to do like they did in New Zealand. I just don't see that the language is going to survive if there can't be an organized effort to preserve it. It's gonna have to come from the community and from the Native organizations. (personal interview, September 27, 2009)

Tom's statement reflects not only his leadership style but also his unique position within the community. Although Tom was married to a Yup'ik woman from the community and raised his family in Naparyaraq, Tom was still aware of his unique role in the community. Because he was not born and raised in Naparyaraq, he knew the boundaries of his role in the community. Although he was the instructional leader, he still respected the community's voice when it came to the education of the children of Naparyaraq. It is understandable why Tom felt that the effort had to derive from the community.

While most of the teachers appeared to show support for the local administration, they had less encouraging words for the district administration. The immersion teachers seemed to agree that the support from the district was minimal at best. When discussing support from the district, the major themes that appeared frequently focused on monetary support, training for teachers and teacher morale. One topic especially interesting related to the district's failure to recognize the Naparyaraq Immersion Program as a distinct program. Because the Naparyaraq Immersion Program was the only Yup'ik Immersion Program in the district's seven schools, it had unique goals and needs, which related to curriculum, testing, and teacher training. Some teachers felt the unique goals of the program and the needs of the program were not adequately met by the district. For the majority of the program's existence, the teachers mainly worked independently on the goal of language revitalization. The district's lack of recognition toward the teachers and the program appeared to cause some teachers to feel unappreciated. This feeling was evident in Dora's comment,

"We're the only Yup'ik Immersion program in the whole district and were not ever recognized for that. We probably have the most Yup'ik teachers here too" (personal interview, March 10, 2009). Because the Yup'ik immersion was a program with unique needs, Dora also stated that, at times, the immersion teachers felt isolated in their efforts to sustain the language.

> The hardest part is not having support from the district. We don't have any monetary support or any other kind of support for training. We also don't get a chance to collaborate with other immersion programs. We've been just stale. Every year we should have an ongoing you know…to keep us encouraged. (personal interview, March 10, 2009).

Dora's statement demonstrates that the teachers desire to connect and learn from other immersion programs is not being fulfilled. The districts lack of support toward teacher training appears to result in teacher burn out.

*Success*

The focus groups and interviews showed the Yup'ik Immersion teachers and instructional leader regarded the Ayaprun Immersion School highly as a successful school, which was meeting the goals of language revitalization. Many of the teachers, including the instructional leader believed the evidence of success was demonstrated by the Ayaprun students' ability to speak in Yugtun. The teachers commented that by observing the Ayaprun Immersion School teachers, they had hoped to understand how teachers were able to get students to speak in Yup'ik. Throughout the seven years that

the Naparyaraq Immersion Program was in operation, only a few teachers got a chance to visit the school. Although teachers pointed out the need for training, very little support in terms of money was being given. Since that the district was offering very little financial support, teachers felt frustrated. In the past, teachers were able to visit the Ayaprun Immersion School and they returned with a few ideas, but most felt it was not enough.

Though there was some frustration with the lack of support, the teachers and instructional leader did notices successes other than in reading and writing. Two visible differences appeared to be the students' cultural pride and behavior. The teachers pointed out the immersion students' sense of Yup'ik identity while the Instructional leader noticed how well behaved the immersion students were. Because there hasn't been an in-depth study on the outcomes of the Naparyaraq Immersion Program, the instructional leader wasn't exactly sure how the immersion program benefited the immersion students although he appeared convinced that it positively affected students' behavior. He said, "What we've noted is that the behaviors are, I think, just as good, if not better of, kids coming out of the immersion program so the social aspect I think, has been real positive." (personal interview, September 27, 2009).

As the instructional leader, who dealt with students' behavioral issues, it is interesting that Tom was able to make this observation. My own observations as a teacher within the school agrees with what the Instructional leader stated. Compared to students from the English multi-age program, very seldom would I see Yup'ik

immersion students in the office. Due to the fact that the immersion wing was around the corner from my classroom, I had direct observation of students' behaviors. At times, when the hallway noise became too loud, I would have to leave my classroom to investigate. In most cases, I would discover the source of the noise originated from students in the English multiage program.

Another interesting observation in regards to the immersion students' behavior related to the amount of respect given to teachers. In comparison to the English multiage students, the Yup'ik immersion students appeared to respect their teachers more. For example, when walking through the hallways to lunch, immersion students appeared to be less rowdy than the English multiage students. As they followed their teachers to lunch, they appeared more self-controlled. The differences in behaviors between the immersion students and the English multi-age students seem to suggest that the immersion students are learning more than the language. The students in the Yup'ik Immersion Program appear to connect with the respect of the culture through language. Related to success, Dora, the Kindergarten teacher, described how the students' Yup'ik identity was emerging.

> Success to me is the pride and joy of the students' discovery of who they are as a Yup'ik person and becoming aware of their identity through their language and culture. It spreads out to the family, to the grandparents. (personal interview, March 10, 2009)

During the focus group, it was obvious how important Yup'ik identity was to Mary when she tearfully stated, "The realization that we are Yup'ik with the language, you

could see that the pride" (focus group #2, November 5, 2009). Because many of the Yup'ik teachers attended school during the Bureau of Indian Affairs era and were forbidden to speak their Yup'ik language, it was apparent that students' sense of Yup'ik pride was important to the Yup'ik teachers. When discussing the Yup'ik immersion program, it was obvious that the program was having a positive effect on students' emotional and behavioral health.

*Quality Staff*

Throughout the focus group discussions, training and teaching certification appeared to be a significant concern of the teachers. Although four of the teachers were not state certified, many of them had years of experience teaching as preschool teachers, bilingual teachers and teacher aides. Of the six teachers, Sally and Mary were the only ones who had Type A endorsements, which meant that they were qualified to teach in any elementary classroom in the state of Alaska. Sally who had over twenty years of experience as a classroom teacher was also in the process of obtaining her Master's in Applied Linguistics. In addition to seeking out supportive classes, teachers were enrolled in degree programs, which would help them to become state certified. In addition, Martha and Donna were recently accepted into a five-year Yup'ik degree program, and Dora was very close to getting her Type A teaching degree. Although the rest of the teachers did not have certified Type A teaching licenses, they had Type M provisional licenses, which allowed them to teach in the immersion setting.

Although the majority of the immersion teachers were fluent Yup'ik speakers, a few of them did not appear confident in their roles as Yup'ik language teachers. For example, during the focus groups, Mary stated,

> I think the district should give us more support, although we all speak Yugtun, that doesn't make us qualified to be in a classroom. [The district] should give us support to take courses toward teaching a language. We need to attend the Yup'ik classes that are offered in the summer. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

As a teacher within the Yup'ik immersion program, Mary's statement reflects her direct knowledge that being a Yup'ik language teacher entails more than just knowing the language. Mary's experience in the classroom shows that training is not only a desire, but it is also a need. Martha who was enrolled in basic Yup'ik reading and writing classes described her own lack of confidence when it came to teaching the Yup'ik language.

> I feel inadequate because this is my fourth year taking Yup'ik classes and I still feel that I'm not qualified enough. I have to meet the district curriculum standards, create lessons plans to meet all the standards and when they start talking about all these tests, my mind starts working. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

Although Martha had more than thirty years of experience as an English preschool teacher and was a proficient Yup'ik speaker, she still felt her Yup'ik classes were not adequately preparing her to be an immersion teacher. At one point during a casual

lunch conversation with Martha, I was able to get an idea of what her class involved. She described how she had to translate an English ad into Yup'ik. This was just one example that demonstrated how the Yup'ik language degree program, which Martha was enrolled, appeared useful for the goals of reading and writing, but it did not appear to help her with her immediate needs; second language pedagogy. In addition to feeling insecure in her role as an immersion teacher, Martha's concern regarding testing appeared to be shared by most of the teachers in the immersion program. This theme will be discussed in the next section.

*Assessment*

The No Child Left Behind Act has put pressure on the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program. Although students are instructed through the Yup'ik language, they are not exempted from the State of Alaska Standards Based Assessments. State mandated testing not only affects the Naparyaraq immersion program but is also an issue for other Indigenous language programs. Equating high stake testing towards success has resulted in extra demands of immersion teachers. Because the immersion students are not exempted from testing, teachers not only feel pressured to get students to speak Yup'ik, but are also drawn heavily toward preparing students for the test. The instructional leader gave insight to the struggle to maintain balance.

> The problem that we're having and I'm sure the other immersion programs have is that there are a lot of expectations and a lot of pressure to conform and

> make sure that kids are successful in the Western world and that's the dilemma that we face. (personal interview, September 27, 2009)

Tom's statement shows that as the instructional leader, he is aware of the demands placed on the immersion program. The goal to get students to succeed in the Western, English speaking world had amounted to more pressure for immersion students. Because the No Child Left Behind Act is not culturally responsive toward Indigenous cultures and immersion programs (Gutierrez, et al., 2002), some teachers within the immersion program have had to fore-go culturally relevant teaching in order to focus on concepts and skills expected on the test. Mary, the third grade transition teacher, gave evidence of this when she stated,

> When were doing the English part, I focus on geometry words such as: symmetry, vertices, and face. I already introduced compound words and now were doing prefixes and suffixes. (focus group interview #1, October 15, 2009).

Mary's comment shows that the pressure to teach test content was evident even during students' transition period from Yup'ik to English. Because students' main instruction up until this time was Yup'ik, the main purpose of the transition class was to introduce the third graders to English reading and writing. Rather than focusing on this goal, it appeared that the pressure for students to be successful in the Standard Based Assessments influenced Mary's instruction.

The Alaska Standards Based Assessment was not the only test that impeded teachers' efforts. As a requirement of the school's improvement plan, immersion

teachers were also required to continuously test students' English reading and math skills. It appeared that English testing was affecting teachers' efforts to teach only in Yup'ik. These concerns were evident in Mary's statement:

> How do they expect us to be successful when they are giving us these other things to do? You know, right now I feel really overwhelmed with AIMS web, with level testing and then trying to help the kids learn to read. You know those little ones, sometimes I really worry that I might not be able to help them cause there's so many things that are their putting down on us. (focus group #3, February 18, 2009)

For Mary, it appeared that the testing was beginning to take its toll. In addition to teaching Yup'ik, Mary had to worry about Aimsweb and levelized testing. Since Naparyaraq had been on a school-wide plan of improvement, the Aimsweb testing was required as a way to monitor and show evidence of students' progress in English reading and math. As a result, Mary was not only responsible to teach her students in Yup'ik, but she had to worry about Aimsweb testing and levelized testing. Because the Aimsweb tests and levelized tests were designed to be given in English, they appeared not only unnecessary, but they also took time away from Yup'ik language instruction.

In addition to taking precedence over Yup'ik instruction, many of the immersion teachers complained that the testing had no relevance to what was being taught in the classroom. For example, Dora's frustration toward the assessment was apparent when she stated, "The assessment isn't even geared to what were doing, especially the reading. It isn't linked with what we are doing language wise and

culture wise" (personal interview, March 10, 2009 ). My observations in Dora's classroom corresponded to what she stated. During my observation, I noticed the kindergarten students illustrating a village scene. With the assistance of the teacher, the students sounded out the Yup'ik letters as they were writing a sentence. Because students were learning the Yup'ik alphabet and sounds, it was easy to see why Dora felt the way she did. The levelized testing assessed students on the English alphabet and sounds, which did not correlate to the Yup'ik alphabet. It appeared the immersion students were being tested in English even though they were being instructed in Yup'ik. In order for tests to have content validity, they should assess the material within the curriculum. Thus, a mismatch exists between the curriculum and the tests. This pressure leads teachers away from teaching the full Yup'ik curriculum. The instructional leader was able to describe this more in detail.

> One of the primary dilemmas that we face in our program is how are we going to make sure that our students are successful in both worlds and that has a lot of impact because if your really going to learn a language, you need to spend a lot of time in that language cause you really start to think in that language. You know? Up to at least the fifth of sixth grade and hopefully even beyond that. Right now, there's so much pressure with the testing and No Child Left Behind. (personal interview, September 27, 2009)

The instructional leader understood that two goals were at stake, the goal to be successful in Yup'ik and the goal to be successful in English. He also understood that

the No Child Left Behind Act placed a burden on the Yup'ik Immersion Program in the form of testing.

*Need for Teacher Collaboration*

Due to the fact that the Naparyaraq School failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress, new measures were being taken to improve reading and math instruction. In addition to continuous reading and math assessments, a new reading and math curriculum was being implemented. As a result, all teachers in the Naparyaraq were spending the majority of their collaboration time learning how to implement the new curriculum and how to best utilize testing to ensure student progress. For the Immersion teachers, the priority on learning the new curriculum and testing took collaboration time, which could otherwise be spent on discussing issues related to the immersion program. The lack of collaboration appeared to negatively affect immersion teachers' morale. Because teachers were not meeting often, teachers appeared disconnected. During an interview, when asked to describe some of the features that helped to make the immersion program a success, Dora gave some insight into the lack of collaboration among teachers.

> Dora: To me that would be the most important feature of a staff working together; teamwork.
>
> Dora: Work together, help each other out, not just
>
> Me: Collaboration
>
> Dora: Collaboration, not…not… little cliques here and there

Me : Yah

Dora: Working together

Dora: Naugg' mairpak pinrilngukut (You know, like right now, we're not doing it)

Me : Uh-huh

Dora: That's what I will say. Work together for a successful program

Me: Yah good point

(personal interview, March 10, 2009)

Rather than working together as a group, Dora made it known that teachers were forming their own cliques. Less teamwork existed among the group of immersion teachers. It appears that because teachers were not meeting as a whole group, some teachers in the group were instead rallying around each other to support each other. Because these small groups were forming, other teachers were beginning to feel excluded. As a teacher in the school, there were times when I observed the tension among the group. The only thing that appeared to dissolve this tension was when the teachers were allowed to collaborate and put the issues on the table. After collaborating, the teachers seemed to be more cohesive. Not only were they upbeat, but they also listened attentively to what each other had to say.

Although the one-on-one interview provided a more personal atmosphere for Dora to vent her frustrations in regards to collaboration, it was interesting that the during the last focus group, another teacher additional evidence of this lack of collaboration. When asked what qualities contributed to a successful program, Sally

offered the following, "Collaboration with teachers. Having one goal and one vision for the Immersion program written so all of us can see what our vision is, what our goal is" (focus group # 3, February 18, 2009). Soon after Sally made this comment, Mary asked the other teachers if the Yup'ik immersion program had a mission statement to which Sally responded, "There is no mission statement, no supporting cast, whose doing this, whose doing that, you know? We're just put in the classrooms and told, 'Here are the standards and grade level expectations" (focus group # 3, February 18, 2009).

The focus group discussion helped to shed some light not only into the immersion program's need for a mission statement it also showed that the immersion program didn't really have a clear direction. The absence of a mission statement gave evidence that the immersion teachers were not allowed enough quality time to collaborate.

*Curriculum*

When curriculum was addressed, the majority of the teachers agreed that the immersion program lacked adequate materials. During focus groups interviews, individual interviews and informal conversations, the majority of the immersion teachers emphasized that more materials were needed for the immersion program. In particular, teachers pointed out that the curriculum in Science and Social Studies was lacking. This lack of materials appeared especially prevalent in the higher grades because the concepts and vocabulary needed in the higher grades were more technical

and advanced. While materials were also needed in the lower grades, the teachers appeared to have an easier time translating the less technical concepts; therefore weren't as disadvantaged as the higher grades when it came to translated materials. State mandated testing also appeared to heavily influence teachers tendencies to focus on language arts and math. Due, in part, to the lack of materials available in Yup'ik, some teachers were not consistently using the Yup'ik language as the medium of instruction throughout the subject areas.

Math in grades first through third appeared to be the area where teaching in Yup'ik was the most problematic. Because Kindergarten didn't require as much math language as the higher grades, the teachers seemed to be using mostly Yup'ik during math instruction. On the other hand, in the higher grades, teachers were at a disadvantage. For example, Donna, the 2nd and 3rd grade teacher stated, "I'm using Saxon Math but in English, not in Yugtun cause it's not translated in Yugtun." As a former teacher in the Yup'ik Immersion program, my experience and observations have led me to believe that many teachers avoid teaching the Saxon Math curriculum that was adopted by the district, not only because there are few translated materials, but also because the Saxon Math program has extensive technical language. Donna continued to give insight into this when she stated, "The math meeting section that were suppose to be doing, atuuyitaqa (I don't use it), cause it's all in English it's not translated in Yugtun. It's pretty long" (focus group #1, October 15, 2009). Because the effort to change the Saxon Math into Yup'ik was tedious and time consuming, it is easy to see why some teachers avoid teaching math in Yup'ik.

In addition to translations being a problem with math, it appeared that treating math as an isolated subject seemed to be a problem. Unlike in the Western world, where math has traditionally been taught as an individual subject, Yup'ik math has historically been a tool, which has aided in one's survival. Because math concepts are holistically embedded within the culture, it seems kind of counterintuitive to teach math as a separate subject. Rather than treating math entirely as a separate subject, from a Yup'ik perspective, it is intertwined and very important within the culture. It is evident that the Yup'ik people have cultural and traditional knowledge of mathematical concepts, which they are implemented when building qayaks (kayaks), making parka patterns (kuspeks), and estimating how much dry fish is needed for the winter. Lipka (1998) further describes how important math was in the context of Yup'ik survival, "From elders it has been increasingly clear that the Yup'ik 'mathematics and science' originate from the knowledge required to survive and to live a long life in the harsh and unforgiving subarctic" (p.145).

The cultural and traditional aspect of math was expressed during one of the focus groups when the teachers were discussing the curriculum. As the teachers were talking, Martha pointed out that many times the teachers had failed to include the elders when it came time to teaching. When referring to elders who had previously come into the classroom to assist with quspeq (kuspek) making, she stated,

> They don't really measure, they measure from the shoulder, whatever they have. They did not call them inches and yards. That's part of what our elders

> can teach us in that math area. They could teach us whatever they do with their hand measurements. (focus group #1, October 15, 2009)

Martha's comments showed that although she understood that math was embedded within the Yup'ik culture, elders, who have the most cultural knowledge, were not being utilized enough when it came to teaching core subjects and the language. Although the teachers complained about a lack of materials, the focus group discussions showed that the teachers did indeed have and sometimes applied the cultural and traditional knowledge into their curriculum in order to teach the core subjects. For example, Martha pointed out that everyday observations could be used and transferred over to Western math concepts, when she stated,

> I talked about iraluq (the moon) this morning. Look at the iraluq (moon). Did you see it? It was full. Later on in the month it'll get darker and pretty soon it'll be half. Avuucikuq. (It will be half) That's part of math, one half. (focus group #1, October 15, 2009)

Martha's comments not only show her understanding that traditional concepts could be transferred to Western concepts but also that teachers did not have to depend so much on the translated Western curriculum as they believed they needed to. The teachers had cultural knowledge and knew it could be applied and transferred over to the Western curriculum. Additionally, some teachers believed that cultural knowledge was equally relevant. The teachers continued to give evidence to this when they were discussing a class that was attended by Mary earlier in the summer.

Mary: Imkut-llu atkuliaqameng cali, they have family designs imna-llu mani angutek nau pingqetulriit makucineng. (And them, when they make parkas, they have family designs, like here, you know, like them two men, they used to have this kind)

Dora: Qanemciuluni. (It's an oral story.)

Mary: Qanemciuluni tauna miryaqtallrit-llu taum Kukugyarpiim taum qanemcii ilakai tawaten atkuli(inaudible) (It's an oral story. That one, who would always vomit, that Kukugyarpiim, that one, it is related to that story.)

Mary: Imkut-llu ahh pukilitullrulriit cali tamakuneng cunag' unat, they used their hands umm they used three fingers to make their uhh we call them pukik. (Them too ahh those people that use the patterned parkas they too apparently use their hands…they used their hands umm they used three fingers to make uhh we call them pukik 'patterns')

Dora: tukullrit llu waten tangerluki nalluyunaki without cuqteqing your feet (They used to know how to measure the feet just by looking.)

Mary: The (inaudible) patterns unani naug calf skin-auluteng augkumiut tamaqcaneng pitulliniuluku. Elicalqakut MCC attend allemteni We learned this when we attended MCC and if you put your foot on a piece of paper you trace your foot you could measure if it's true ukumeng-gguq ayagnirluci waten waten-ll piluku (The patterns…you know them people down there use calf skins for their parka patterns and call them "tamaqcaq." We learned this when we attended MCC and if you put your foot on a piece of paper you trace your

foot you could measure if it's true… its said if you start here like this and then do this (demonstrating it))

Dora: aanaka-ll pitullruk tawaten tangvatulqaqa (My mother used to do that too. I used to watch her.)

Sally: Gosh, tamakut tamaritput ilait. (Gosh, were losing some of those.)

Dora: Tukullrit-llu waten tangerluki nalluyunaki without cuqteqing your feet they know (They would know the measurements of the feet just by observing. )

Dora: Teguluki waten measure-ayunaki tekulleput nalluyunaki how much pillerkait. (They never took our feet and measured them like this, instead they always knew how much to use.)

Mary: Ii-i. (Yes.)

(focus group #1, October 15, 2009)

The teachers' discussion gave evidence that math played a significant part in the Yup'ik peoples' livelihood and was applicable in their everyday lives. The teachers' pointed out that the elders' applied mathematical concepts during the sewing of parka patterns and seal skin boots. It was observed that instead of using measurement tools that are currently in use today, the Yup'ik people had their own way of measuring. For example, Mary's comment about the Yup'ik people using their own three fingers to measure parka patterns showed that the Yup'ik people understood the concept of non-standard units. Because the Yup'ik women were the sole clothing makers and skin sewers in their families, they also used their body parts as standard units of measurements. In most cases, the women were able to use their intuitive

senses and observation skills in order to figure out precisely how much seal-skin was needed to make a pair of boots. The most important thing gained from the teachers' discussion was that math was not only taught and learned through Yup'ik everyday experiences but it was also passed down through cultural and traditional knowledge.

When questioned about whether or not the teachers were able to meet the district standards while at the same time teaching Yugtun, teachers pointed out that they were in fact addressing many content standards. During calendar time, I was able to observe this. Most teachers appeared to be using reading, writing and math standards during calendar time. Some of the standards included: counting up to a hundred, naming days of the week, and exploring the weather.

Rather than saying that the standards were useful in teaching the Yup'ik language, there were occasions during focus groups when teachers appeared to view them as irrelevant to the goals of the Yup'ik immersion goals. Interestingly, a few teachers also pointed out that because science and math was significant to the survival of the Yup'ik people, many of those standards were in effect being targeted. For example, Sally stated,

> Our life depends on knowing math. From the beginning of the existence of the Yup'ik people, math and science has helped our people to survive. The math and science might not be the math and science which is expected in Western textbooks but it is very much similar. (focus group #1, October 15, 2009).

Dora commented further about how the subject of science was of special importance to our Yup'ik elders when she stated, "Our world, our natural world around us all

related to science." (focus group #1, October 15, 2009). The comments made by both Sally and Dora show that they are aware of the cultural connections related to the subjects of math and science. Additionally, because Dora's past experience in the Yup'ik standards committee made her very knowledgeable of the Yup'ik standards, she was able to give additional evidence that teachers were meeting a variety of subject standards when she stated, "When I met with the Yup'ik standard committee last spring, I noticed that a lot of the standards lead to science, and math" (focus group #1, October 15, 2009).

Although the teachers agreed there wasn't a specific Yup'ik, Science and Social Studies curriculum that they followed, it was discovered through the focus groups and observations that teachers were actually teaching Science. The only difference was that it was culturally based. When asked to describe which subject areas were being targeted, Dora stated, "Reading, writing, math taukuneng (those ones). We mostly concentrate on those because we don't have science books or social studies books. I suppose the weather would be science" (focus group #1, October 15, 2009). Dora's hesitance to say that weather was apart of science could be related to our tendency to believe that Western knowledge is the only accurate representation of knowledge.

The immersion teachers recurring reference toward the weather showed how it was an important part of the Yup'ik culture. During all three of my classroom observations, it was evident that observing the weather was an important part of curriculum. It was interesting that although some teachers stated the lack of science

materials prevented them from teaching science, it was actually being integrated during calendar time.

During the discussions, it was apparent that although the Naparyaraq School had recently adopted a new reading, writing and math curriculum, the Yup'ik immersion teachers were rarely using it. In many cases, rather than benefiting the teachers, it appeared that the curriculum posed more of a setback. Because translated materials were limited and because there was only one curriculum specialist, much of the newly adopted reading, writing and math curriculum was not being translated in a timely fashion. In some cases, the new materials did not appear to appeal to the teachers. As a result, some teachers instead created their own materials and made sure to include the standards, which they expected to be targeted. The consequence of this was that some teachers felt the burden of having to create Yup'ik appropriate materials in replace of the Western materials. When Sally was asked to describe some of the extra demands that came with being an immersion teacher she gave evidence of this burden.

> Because we're supposed to be using the adopted curriculum that district office tells us to use, it can become challenging to enrich the district standards with our cultural teachings. That puts more demand on me to make curriculum from scratch and go from there. (focus group #1, October 15, 2009)

Her statement told me that rather than being of assistance to the teachers, the newly adopted curriculum appeared to be more of a problem. It appeared that the immersion teachers gravitated more toward self-created materials.

In the study, it is apparent that traditionally based curriculum is an important part of the immersion program. On the other hand, the curriculum and standards that the Yup'ik Immersion teachers were expected to follow appeared to cause more of a problem. Although there isn't an adequate amount of materials available to the immersion teachers, it is apparent that their cultural knowledge base has aided in their instruction of reading, writing, math and science.

*Conclusion*

In addition to pointing out the major themes of this research, this section of the paper has described and given evidence to the themes. During the next section of this research paper, the conclusion and implications for the Naparyaraq Immersion Program will be discussed.

# Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

## *Conclusions*

In this study I sought to evaluate the Yup'ik Immersion Program at my school. I collected qualitative data by means of interviews, focus group meetings, classroom observations, and school data. The information gained as a result of the research gathered on the Naparyaraq Immersion School not only could be used to improve the school program but could also be used to inform the teachers, parents, administrators, the community and other school programs as well. Because little research has been conducted on Indigenous language programs by Indigenous researchers in their own settings, the evaluation of the Naparyaraq Immersion School could be beneficial to those wanting to evaluate and improve their own school communities. In this section of the research, implications will be addressed for the district level, local administration level and for the teachers of Naparyaraq. I will also recommend future research for this topic.

## *Implications*

### *District*

Based on my qualitative research, the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program has been and continues to be a work in progress. The Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program is a unique program in such a remote area of Alaska. As the only program within the district and one of few in the state of Alaska that immerses K-2 students in Yup'ik, the immersion staff has had to mostly rely on each other for support. It is

evident that because the immersion teachers had little support from outside resources, that the Naparyaraq Yup'ik Immersion Program was established and maintained mostly through trial and error.

One thing that helped teachers through this trial and error process is to look at other examples of success. One school in particular, the Apayprun Immersion School is considered a successful model, which the Naparyaraq Immersion School wishes to emulate. Due to the fact that Naparyaraq is separated from Bethel by 132 miles, the Naparyaraq teachers rarely have a chance to observe and collaborate with the Ayaprun Immersion teachers. Because the teachers view the Ayaprun Immersion School in Bethel as an ideal model, they are always looking for opportunities to visit the school but are always faced with the question of, "Who will pay for the bill?" In the past, few opportunities have been given to teachers to visit the Ayaprun School mostly because the remoteness and distance between Naparyaraq and Bethel has made it is costly to travel by airplane. For one teacher to visit the Ayaprun school, one round-trip airfare ticket to Bethel from Naparyaraq, in addition to one hotel stay would cost the district approximately five hundred dollars. In addition to money being a factor, there is also the question of who will fill the void of the immersion teacher while she is observing the other school. Because language teaching requires the teacher to be proficient in the language as well as understand the pedagogy of teaching. As a result, the immersion teaching positions are hard to fill. Few people with the exception of the teacher's aide are capable enough to fill the Yup'ik teacher's position. Because Yup'ik language teaching is unique, teacher aides have to be well equipped and knowledgeable to keep

the classroom functioning as if the teacher were there. Therefore, it is important for teacher aides, as well as teachers to be involved in second language training.

Although the data analysis I presented demonstrated evidence of teachers' frustrations in part because of lack of support from the administration level, to some extent, it is understandable why the district is viewed as unsupportive. Some of the factors leading to the district's lack of support could be blamed on Naparyaraq's remoteness as well as its status as the only immersion program in the Lower Yukon School District's eleven schools sites. It appears that the ninety-mile distance between Naparyaraq and the district office does not allow for district personal to have direct knowledge of the Naparyaraq immersion issues. The unique status as the only immersion program in the district is also not something, which the district appears equipped to handle. On the other hand, even though teachers did not view the district as being supportive, they thought the local administration was providing support for the program.

The need for support was a continual theme in this research. As such, I think it is important to address this topic to the Lower Yukon School District of Naparyaraq Immersion Program so they can begin to address the issues. From the research, it was evident that support in terms of training was mostly a concern for the teachers. Even though many of the Naparyaraq Immersion teachers have been in the education field for a long time, it is evident that the goal of language revitalization has motivated the majority of them to seek out courses that will aide in their position as immersion teachers. The research demonstrated that the teachers enroll in many of the courses to

improve their skills as Yup'ik immersion teachers. While these courses are beneficial in helping teachers' Yup'ik reading and writing skills, but they do not appear to directly benefit teachers' goal of supporting students to become proficient oral Yup'ik language speakers. By continuing to look at and model the success of the Ayaprun Immersion School in Bethel, carefully constructed training specifically related to language teaching could be considered as a factor to support teachers in the program goals of language revitalization.

Several years ago, during the course of several summers, Ayaprun teachers were able to participate in an institute that prepared them to meet the specific tasks of language teaching. The grant-funded program supported not only teachers, but teacher aides and bilingual teachers. Although the institute was created for the Lower Kuskokwim teachers, several teachers from the Naparyaraq Immersion Program were able to attend one or two sessions. Up to this day, the Naparyaraq teachers who attended the institute mentioned that it was effective in providing language-teaching support. In order for the Naparyaraq Immersion teachers to reach their fullest potential as language teachers, it is obvious that more language institutes or trainings need to be conducted to provide teachers with examples of how to properly teach to second language learners. Because the Yup'ik language schools within the Lower Kuskokwim District initiated the institute, the district saw a need to provide training. Throughout this study, teachers have made it clear that they also have the same needs.

One thing that has yet to occur in the Naparyaraq Immersion Program are district in-services geared specifically toward the Yup'ik immersion teachers. In the

past, the majority of the in-services given by the district have centered mostly around Saxon Math and Literacy by Design curriculum, which the immersion teachers are not using. Because the immersion teachers are not fully utilizing these Westernized, English speaking language arts and math curriculums, and are instead using their own created materials. As such, the in-service topics have no relevance for the immersion teachers. The most relevant session for the immersion teacher, in the past two years, was a session on cultural math. Other than that, no outside resource personal have ever been invited to conduct sessions specifically to advance the immersion teachers' language revitalization efforts. Because the immersion teachers are considered to be expert language users who are from the community and because they have duties similar to those of a teachers in the English speaking program, they should be able to attend training sessions that are not only supportive towards their goals but also informative of second language teaching and learning. Language teaching specialists should be sought out and invited to lead in-services with the goals of the program in mind. By seeking out language teaching specialists, teachers will be able to distinguish how language teaching contrasts from teaching in a regular classroom. As evidenced by the data analysis, teachers perceive their students' Yup'ik language speaking skills as deficient and believe more training can help to improve the gap. It is hopeful that evidence presented so far and the frustrations voiced from the immersion teachers themselves provided in this research will result in more support from the district administration.

In addition to language teaching specialists, culturally relevant teaching programs such as the Math in a Cultural Context (MCC) Program could be integrated into teacher in-services. Proper teaching methodologies as they relate to language and culture can be modeled not only by language teaching specialists, but demonstrated by MCC's staff as well. The Yup'ik immersion teachers have a unique perspective of the world. In the data analysis, this was evident when the teachers described how math and science is very much a part of the culture. Because survival demanded that the Yup'ik people be intuitive and observant, they have obtained this knowledge through oral stories and also through "trial and error." Although they did not gain this knowledge through the "traditional" Western sense, where one sits at a desk learning, the knowledge they have is equally relevant. The Yup'ik peoples' knowledge base should be taken into consideration and used to create curriculum not only for the Yup'ik immersion program but also for the Yup'ik child in mind. Because it is time consuming to translate the Western curriculum into Yup'ik and because it is at times irrelevant, it would seem more appropriate to expend more time and resources toward the development of culturally relevant Yup'ik materials.

From the discussion above, it is imperative the district involve immersion teachers in the district teacher training efforts so their unique needs can be met. One way in which this can be done is through applying for state and federal grants, which can be used exclusively to train teachers and teacher aides. Like mentioned before, training does take money and time away from the classroom, but by utilizing the expertise of the district staff, more can be done for the Naparyaraq Immersion

Program. Because the district is responsible for the schools within its boundaries, and because they have the money, time, and people, it seems only reasonable for them help the Naparyaraq Immersion School.

*Instructional leader*

Although the current instructional leader is not from the village of Naparyaraq, he is a well-respected leader his connections and family ties to the community. Before he became the instructional leader, one of the contributing reasons that made him into the leader that he is today is his unwavering support for the immersion program. It is understandable now that he is in a higher position of authority, why some individuals continue to expect more from him in terms of paving the direction for the program. As an instructional leader who believes in stewardship, the expectations placed on the instructional leader are unrealistic not only because it contradicts his philosophy, but also because it jeopardize the grassroots away from the Naparyaraq teachers' efforts. The instructional leader's persistence and belief that, "It's gotta come from the people" should be taken as a token of support. Because the past instructional leaders at the school have adopted a more authoritarian leadership style, it is easy to see why some individuals might feel uncomfortable with his leadership style that relies more on listening and understanding from insider knowledge. Rather than feel uncomfortable with the current instructional leader's belief in stewardship, I hope to be a bridge for teachers to feel empowered and realize they are being given some freedom to path the direction of the immersion program. A key to success is for

teachers continue to be the leaders in the goals of language revitalization by expressing their needs to the instructional leader who has given verbal support.

*Teachers*

When faced with new challenges, the staff does its best to work collaboratively to seek solutions to current dilemmas. Recently in the beginning of this school year, the staff became aware that several parents were pulling their children out of the immersion program because of a rumor circulating that the immersion students wouldn't be able to transition successfully into an English classroom when it came time. Rather than continue to let the parents be misinformed, the teachers decided to hold a meeting inviting all the immersion parents to discuss the issues. The outcome of this meeting resulted in more cohesiveness among the teachers and parents. The rumors dissolved and unlike before parents didn't appear as uncertain about the choice of putting their children in the immersion program. Instances like this show that the teachers believe in the program and continue to work hard to improve the program.

Although the above example shows the teachers persistence in overcoming obstacles, there are undoubtedly more challenges ahead. One area, which has been particularly challenging for the teachers has been in getting the students to speak in Yup'ik. The hard work to encourage the students to speak in Yup'ik hasn't produced as much success as teachers want. Instead, success is more apparent in students' reading and writing skills. Although reading and writing is an important skill, the guiding questions teachers need to ask is, "What are the goals of the program?" In a

Yup'ik community, what would the purpose of reading and writing serve? What purpose would speaking serve? Because the Yup'ik language is an oral language and because the elders are speaking and not writing in Yup'ik, it might appear more useful for teachers to focus more on students' Yup'ik speaking skills. Reading and writing should have a cultural focus as they are a part of the curriculum. According to Reyner and Tennant (1995):

> Literacy is an admirable goal: it involves local speakers in developing written materials; it documents for future generations the language and the knowledge the language conveys; it provides the community with a sense of pride in their people and their language; and, at the same time, it gives the student a powerful learning tool (p. 297).

Until the students of Naparyaraq have the authentic language materials, they will unfortunately continue to use "Westernized curriculum." According to Charles (2005) when authentic materials are not used, "the teachings [become] mirror images of what the Western teacher [is]teaching using Yup'ik vocabulary, and sometimes literal translations of Western phrases, songs, and 'ditties' (p. 108). As the Yup'ik leaders of the community of Naparyaraq, the teachers need to continue to demand students speak in Yup'ik, include the community in the language movement, and continue taking courses, which focus of teaching second language learners.

*Future Research Implications for the Naparyaraq Immersion Program*

In order for the Naparyaraq Immersion Program to continue to make improvements, additional research is suggested. One way in which research could benefit the immersion program is through teacher action research within the classroom with particular focus on language use. As teachers, it is not uncommon for us to do research within our classrooms. It is done every day in an informal manner in order to understand why something is not working and how to make improvement. Because the Naparyaraq Immersion teachers are aware that students' language use is not where it should be, teachers could be invited to observe their students' language use within particular settings in order to figure out which settings promote more language production.

The Naparyaraq Immersion teachers high regard of the Ayaprun Immersion Program in Bethel as a successful school should be taken into consideration for further research. Because their hasn't been any program evaluation research done on a successful Yup'ik immersion school, it would be beneficial not only for the Naparyaraq Immersion Program, but also for other communities which are considering establishing immersion programs. Currently among all the languages in Alaska, the Yup'ik language is considered one of the strongest languages. With additional research focusing on a successful immersion program, the efforts to maintain the Yup'ik language will be beneficial.

It is apparent from the data analysis that one way which teachers have been successful and constructive is through the open dialogue that the focus groups

provided. Because teachers haven't been given a lot of chances to meet collaboratively with regards to the needs of the immersion program, there has been less time spent on collaborations. Overall, the focus groups were a positive experience for the teachers. Although the questions during the focus groups were created by the researcher and were meant to elicit information related to the research goals, it was interesting to see that through the process, teachers were able to voice their concerns and come to a better awareness of the program that they otherwise wouldn't have. The focus groups gave the teachers an opportunity to present their thoughts and ideas in regards to the immersion program. It appears that as a result of the focus group, the new school year has brought about some significant changes. For example, because the teachers realized getting the students to speak in Yup'ik was an important goal, a banner was recently hung in the hallway to encourage visitors to the Immersion wing to speak in Yup'ik. Additionally, in order to involve parents in the program, a new parent committee was recently established. It will be interesting to see what these new changes will bring. In order to maintain the open, honest, and effective communication between teachers, focus groups need to be a consistent component of the immersion program. By continuing to use the method of focus groups, teachers can continue to find aspects of the immersion program that need improvement.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

UAF
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS

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**Institutional Review Board**
909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

May 15, 2009

To: Marilee Coles- Ritchie, PhD
Principal Investigator

From: Bridget Stockdale, Research Integrity Administrator
Office of Research Integrity

Re: IRB Continuing Review

Thank you for submitting the annual continuing review for the protocol identified below. It has been reviewed and approved by members of the IRB. On behalf of the IRB, I am pleased to inform you that your request to renew this protocol for another year has been granted.

| | |
|---|---|
| Protocol #: | 08-33 |
| Title: | *Investigating a Yupik Immersion Program: What determines success?* |
| Level: | Expedited |
| Received: | May 7, 2009 |
| Approved: | May 15, 2009 |
| Next Review: | Due May 15, 2010 |

*Any modification or change to this protocol must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Modification Request Forms are available on the IRB website (http://www.uaf.edu/irb/Forms.htm). Please contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.*

Appendix A cont.

May 8, 2008

To: Marilee Coles-Ritchie, PhD

Principal Investigator

From: Bridget Stockdale, Research Integrity Administrator

Office of Research Integrity

Re: IRB Protocol Application

Thank you for submitting the IRB protocol application identified below. This protocol was determined to qualify for expedited review under federal regulations 45 CFR 46.110(F)(7). Therefore the review of your protocol application was done by representative members of the IRB. On behalf of the IRB, I am pleased to inform you that your protocol has been approved.

| | |
|---|---|
| Protocol #: | 08-33 |
| Title: | *Investigating a Yup'ik Immersion Program: What Determines Success?* |
| Level: | Expedited |
| Received: | April 28, 2008 |
| Approved: | May 8, 2008 |
| Renewal: | Continuing Review must be completed by May 8, 2009. |
| | **Note:** We recommend you submit all continuing review documents approximately one month prior to the due date to prevent delays in your research. |

*Any modification or change to this protocol must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Modification Request Forms are available on the IRB website (http://www.uaf.edu/irb/Forms.htm). Please contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.*

Appendix B: IRB Consent Form

**Investigating a Yupik Immersion Program: What Determines Success?**

**Informed Teacher Consent Form**

You are being asked to be a part of a study investigating the Yupik Immersion Program within the Lower Yukon School District (LYSD) located at Hooper Bay School. The goal of the study is to find out if the Hooper Bay School's Immersion model fits the guidelines for immersion programs as described in research literature.

I will need to interview and discuss several aspects of the Hooper Bay's immersion program with you. If you decide to take part, I will observe you in your classroom and ask you to participate in focus group discussions about your ideas and experiences in the Yupik Immersion Program at Hooper Bay School.

**Risk and Benefits of being in the Study/Confidentiality:**
There are no foreseeable risks in your participation in this study. The information gathered will be kept confidential. Your name and the name of your school or village won't be used in any reports or publications.

**Uses of the Information:**
The information collected will be used to inform the Hooper Bay School and community about possible needs and/or modifications in the immersion program. The information may be shared through conference presentations and journal publication with other communities and researchers concerned about Native Language curriculum or programming.

All data collected (tapes, transcripts, notes, etc) will be stored in a secure location at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Brooks 306). Only listed on this Informed Consent Form will have access to the data collected.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may stop participating at any point. If you decide not to participate, none of the information you provided will be used in any non-district reports or publications.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any questions later, please contact me at:

Jean Renee Green
rgreen@loweryukon.org
907-758-1200

Marilee Coles-Ritchie
mcoles65@gmail.com
907-474-6263

Appendix B cont.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-888-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

**Recording of Information:**

_____ You may use a tape recorder to record the interviews. I understand that a tape recorder will provide a more accurate account of what was said. I understand that I have the right to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time.

_____ You may NOT use a tape recorder to record the interviews.

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been provided a copy of this form.

This information is for:

_____ Jean Renee Green's Thesis Study on Investigating a Yupik Immersion Program: What Determines Success? Master's program study & others (researchers, local leaders, educators, community members, etc.)

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| **Print Name (participant)** | **Print Name (Obtaining Consent)** |
| _____ | _____ |
| **Signature** | **Date** **Signature** |
| **Date** | |

Appendix C: Interview and Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group #1 Questions for Immersion teachers

Do you consider yourself bilingual? Why or why not?

How much Yupik versus English do you use in your classroom? What percentage would you say?

How much Yupik versus English do the children use in the classroom? What percentage would you say?

Does the curriculum in your classroom consist of content areas subjects such as math, social studies and science? And if so, describe some of the activities in these subject areas.

Is there a lack of support materials for teaching content subjects in Yupik?

Can you meet the standards outlined in the Alaska State or district curriculum handbook in your Yupik classroom? Describe how you do this.

Focus Group #2 Questions for Immersion teachers

What language is used most in the community? And what is the students' first language?

Are the goals for the program bilingualism?

How do students transition from the Yupik program to the English program?

How is English language development supported in the Yupik Immersion Program?

What professional development courses have you taken to support you as an Immersion teacher?

How is Yupik language development supported when students transition into the English Program?

Appendix C cont.

Focus Group #3 Questions for Immersion teachers

Does the administration support the Immersion Program? Does administration support the Immersion Program?

What views do you hear in the community about the Yupik language?

In your opinion has the Immersion Program made an impact in our efforts to revitalize the Yupik language? Why or why not?

What successes have you seen as a result of the Yupik Immersion Program? What do you consider a success?

What has been the hardest struggle each of you has faced in the Yupik Immersion Program?

What are the features of a successful Immersion program?

What extra demands are placed on you as an immersion teacher? How do you cope with those demands and why do you cope with those demands?

Instructional Lead Teacher

What do you believe are the strengths of the Yup'ik immersions program?

What do you believe are the weaknesses of the Yup'ik immersion program?

What are the strengths of the immersion team?

What are the weaknesses of the Immersion Program?

In what ways do the immersion teachers work collaboratively?

How do the immersion teachers overcome issues or difficulties?

In what ways does the Hooper Bay school administration support the program?

How could the administration support the program more?

In what ways does the district support the program?

How could the district support the program more?

Appendix C cont.

In what ways do the parents support the program?

How could the parent support the Immersion program more?

What kind of community support is there for the Immersion program?

What are the goals of the Immersion program and do you agree with those goals or should they be changed?

Is there a mission statement for the Immersion program?

How do you believe the Immersion program could be improved?

Instructional Leader Interview

From your perspective what does a quality immersion program look like?

How does the Naparyaraq Immersion Program compare to the quality Immersion Program that you just described?

In your mind is there a quality Immersion program that comes to the top of your head?

How important is the community's support in the program?

What are the long-range goals of the program?

What impact has the immersion program made on student success and if there are any successes, can you describe them?

Are there any professional development courses being offered to the immersion teachers?

What are your ideas for language revitalization?